NEW
# NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

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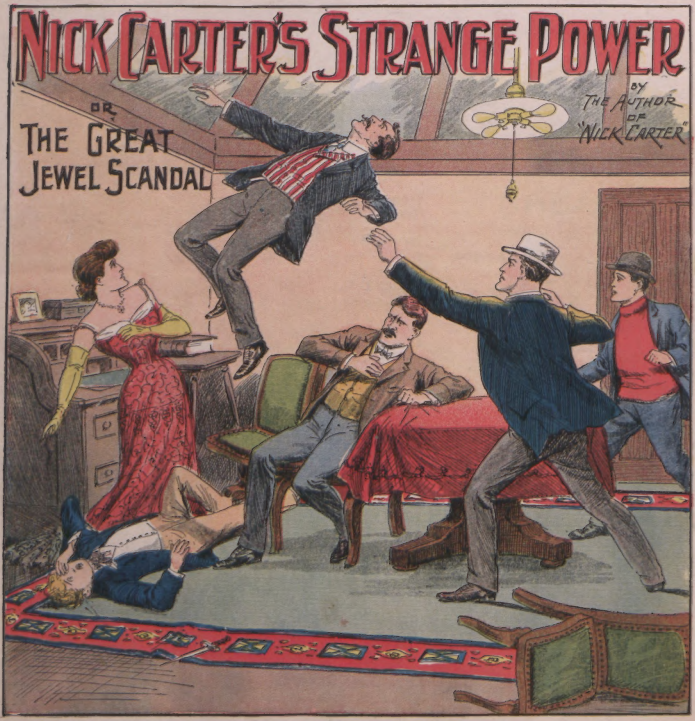
## NICK CARTER'S STRANGE POWER

OR,

## THE GREAT JEWEL SCANDAL

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"



Nick seized "Oppie the Devil" in his arms, and with an effort of superhuman strength threw him straight through the heavy glass of the skylight.

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# NICK CARTER'S STRANGE POWER;

OR,

# The Great Jewel Scandal.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT THE CAMERA TOLD.

The telephone bell rang, and the chief of police held the receiver to his ear for a moment; then, hanging it up, he said, gravely:

"Another great jewelry robbery, Nick."

The great detective, who was sitting smoking with the chief in the latter's private office, asked, as he flicked the ash off his cigar:

"There have been a few, then?"

Nick, who, with his assistants, had been taking a well-earned vacation in Canada, had just returned that morning, browned and happy, filled to the brim with stories of hunting and fishing.

"Well, I should remark. Why, if this keeps on, there won't be enough jewels left in New York City to keep the pawnshops going. Robbing people of their jewels has become an epidemic, Nick, and I want you to look into this matter for me; will you?"

The detective hesitated. He knew what was awaiting him at home. An English earl had written in strongest terms relative to a case of his which involved royalty. Japan needed his services; the czar also requested him to come abroad; one of the Standard Oil magnates had work for him to do, and there were countless other cases, more or less important, awaiting his pleasure. But Nick, who was better posted than he would admit, was interested in the matter of which the chief was speaking.

Before he left town he had heard of the losses society women were sustaining, and the great mystery which shrouded every outrage. The papers, which reached him each day during his trip, kept him informed, and, in spite of the very flattering demands upon his time and skill made by those high in authority, Nick decided to let foreign countries take care of their criminals and aid the

chief to rid New York of those criminals who were a menace to her good order and well-being. Therefore he held out his hand, that strong right hand, so supple, so skillful and so honorable, saying:

"All right, chief, I'll do it for you." And as he grasped Nick's hand, the chief said, heartily:

"Nick, you're a brick. When you take hold of a case I know the criminals are as good as caught, and throw all responsibility aside."

"Just kindly turn it over to me, eh?" Nick said, laughing, rising to leave.

"Could I do better?" the chief asked, looking admiringly at the man he honored so highly.

Nick laughed, shrugged his shoulders and left the office. Few who saw him pass out knew that the great detective was in their midst.

It is seldom that he goes abroad in his proper person, for he is too well known. To-day he was disguised as a Canadian guide, his tanned skin lending itself to the idea, and those who noticed him at all merely wished that such a superb physique could be cultivated outside the Canadian woods.

The chief had furnished Nick with memoranda of the various cases, and when he reached his office he settled down at his desk, and began studying the notes.

After half an hour he summoned Chick and put matters before him.

"You see the mice have been playing a pretty cute game while we were out of the way," he said, handing Chick the slips.

Chick read them through carefully, and then asked:

"You consider all these cases the work of one or more persons?"

"Of course. Don't you?"

"Yes. The same methods have been pursued."

Nick sat thinking.

"The idea has struck me that it is possible these ladies may have entered into an agreement to lose their jewels, or that others have followed the lead of the first one. Bridge plays the very deuce with pocket money."

"That may be," Chick admitted.

"I am going to interview the last sufferer, and you might go to the one who was robbed night before last. She is Miss Laura Winston, of No. 23 Elliston Place."

"The young lady who was introduced to society just before Lent, and who tried to elope the next day with the coachman?"

"The very same. I'm going to see Mrs. Hilda Orleton, of 786 Riverside Drive. She reported her loss while I was with the chief."

"Anything special you want me to do?"

"No, just find out all you can. Make her tell what she knows, and, if she won't, see what you can make of the matter. Somehow I feel as though there was something strange about this case. You see each woman has been robbed in the same way. The jewels have been taken from their persons, they admit, and none of them own to having been in any place where they might come in contact with people whose reputations were unknown to them."

"I see."

"According to my way of looking at it, there is either a conspiracy among them, by means of which they can dispose of their jewels and pay gambling or other debts, or there is some pretty slick work going on."

"Very well, I'll keep that in mind," said Chick, rising.

"By the way, send Patsy to me," Nick added, as Chick was leaving the room.

While waiting a moment for Patsy, Nick took up the receiver and put himself in communication with the chief.

"That you, Nick?" the chief cried. "Regular case of telepathic communication. I had my hand on the receiver to call you, when the bell rang. Another case has been reported. This time it is Geraldine Summers, the English actress. She lost a magnificent sunburst last night. She mourns it not only because of its value, but because it was given her by a dear friend. The person's name she will not divulge, but we can guess who it is. The gift was made a few years ago, you understand, when a certain party in England was not occupying his present exalted position."

"Yes, I understand."

"The actress thinks that perhaps there may be a plot to rob her of other jewels, which came from the same exalted source. She suspects that the one-time generous donor thinks it the part of prudence to get them back."

"That's possible."

"Can you cover this last complaint?"

"Sure. Shift that responsibility, chief, and when I have anything to tell you I'll pour it into your waiting ear."

The chief began to laugh, and, with the chuckle sounding in his ear, Nick put up the receiver.

"This is becoming very interesting," he thought, and then he turned to Patsy, who was standing by the window looking down into the street.

"See anything, Pat?" Nick asked.

"There's a dinky little chap hanging about," Patsy replied. "He was there all day yesterday."

"That changes matters then, Patsy. Is Ten-Ichi in?"

"Yes. He's sitting looking into space. Once he roused up, with a peculiar look on his face, to inform me that Japan had won again. I don't understand these Japanese, Nick."

"Neither do I, my boy, but Ten-Ichi is a very valuable man."

"Of course," Patsy returned, heartily.

"Very well. You take the 'dinky chap' in tow. Keep

close to him until you land him. Tell Ten-Ichi I want him."

Patsy nodded and went out, and Nick faced the subtle Oriental.

In a few words he went over the case, and gave Ten-Ichi directions to visit the actress.

"She may not want to talk to me," Ten-Ichi suggested, respectfully.

"I think she will. She has played in Japan, and, I have heard, is quite proficient in your language."

"I can but try," was the courteous answer, and the little Japanese detective backed from the room, bowing with each step.

The other assistants often wondered that the Emperor of Japan was willing to allow a member of the royal household to leave the island empire and place himself under the direction of any foreigner, even the greatest detective in the world; but he and Nick understood.

Ten-Ichi was not the only one of royal blood who, casting aside his rank, had come to this country to profit by lessons learned from Americans. Surrounded by secret enemies as he was, the emperor had need of a most efficient secret service, and, respecting Nick's skill as he did, he considered it a great favor for the detective to admit the young prince among his assistants and to allow him to be trained in methods unknown to Japan. Ten-Ichi looked forward to the time when he would have the honor and pleasure of guarding his royal master and seeking out the enemies of his country.

Ten-Ichi had just left the room when the deaf and dumb photographer brought in a pile of proofs, pulled from plates taken the day before. In Nick Carter's basement was a contrivance, worked by electricity, which took snap shots of everyone passing. The shutter worked continuously, and thus the great detective was enabled to get an excellent idea of the people passing his house, and to determine if he was shadowed.

As he looked carefully over the proofs, he saw that Patsy was right. All the previous day the house had been shadowed by the little fellow of boyish appearance, wearing a short, light overcoat and carrying a cane. The day had been very warm, and yet this little chap had been hovering about wrapped up in his overcoat.

"Now whom does he belong to?" Nick asked himself, as he handed back the proofs, with a smile of approval to his photographer. The latter smiled back, and felt happy all day. Nick's smile of approval was something he could understand and for which he worked unceasingly.

"The case begins well," Nick thought, as he started to change his disguise. "We have traces of good and also bungling work. The house is openly shadowed, either by a woman, a boy, or a dwarf, and I am inclined to think it is a boy. He is too straight for a dwarf, and too open in his movements for a woman. Nick, Nick, don't grow cynical. You mean for women of the criminal class. There are thousands of lovely women in the world, and no one knows it better than you," and with this reproof delivered to himself Nick carefully adjusted his eyeglass, drew on a pair of light colored gloves, and let himself out through the basement, looking like a young exquisite of twenty-two, very self-sufficient, but a little nervous, seeking to hide his diffidence under an assumption of boldness he did not feel.

In the meanwhile Patsy, looking a dirty newsboy to the life, was following the dinky chap, and Ten-Ichi, dressed in native costume, was being driven rapidly to the magnificent hotel where the English actress had her temporary home while delighting New York audiences with her wonderful talent.

The machinery has been set in motion. Nick Carter has started to run down the quarry. Let those who are guilty beware.

## CHAPTER II.

### MRS. HILDA ORLETON.

Mrs. Hilda Orleton was a very beautiful woman. Past her twenties, she was in the very prime of life, and possessed all the fascinating qualities of a highly educated and polished society woman.

As Nick was shown into her presence he experienced a feeling that he was meeting some one he knew very well, and yet as he looked into the dark eyes and watched the smile light up the handsome face, he could not recognize his hostess.

Mrs. Orleton glanced at the correctly engraved card bearing the name:

"Mr. Kerston Phillips."

"Did I understand that you come from the chief of police?" she asked, in a sweet, deep voice.

Nick bowed, let his eyeglass fall, fumbled after it, and, finally adjusting it, lisped:

"Yes, madam. The chief has honored me."

"How so? Please be seated," responded Mrs. Orleton, dropping gracefully into a chair, and looking over the seemingly nervous youth before her.

"In selecting me for this most exquisite pleasure," was the gallant answer.

Mrs. Orleton laughed in a manner that sounded strangely familiar to Nick, but he could not remember where he had heard it before.

"I did not know that the police department was a school for good manners," she said, banteringly.

"I am but a recent addition to it, madam," Nick said, with an assumption of dignity. "The average detective is no fit person to approach a lady like you, and so the chief detailed me to that pleasant and important duty."

The lady put two plump hands over dainty little ears, merriment dancing in her brilliant eyes.

"Oh, hush," she said, mockingly.

Nick recognized her. That "Oh, hush" had fallen upon his ears under entirely different circumstances, but he knew the intonation.

"It's but the truth," he said, stammering, as though overcome by her beauty.

"I must compliment the chief, but now to business. To get down to facts. You say he sent you to interview me relative to my recent loss?"

Nick bowed, and once more lost his eyeglass.

"Well, I can state the whole matter in a few words: Last night I attended a little party, very select. First we all went to see Miss Geraldine Summers. What a rare actress she is, isn't she?"

"I really do not know, but I will make it a point to see her, now that you say she is so good."

Once more the deep voice cried "Oh, hush."

Nick smiled grimly to himself. Strange that the cleverest people will allow little things to escape.

"To go on," the lady continued, drawing a filmy point-lace handkerchief through her fingers, which were heavily jeweled.

"Yes, continue; I love to hear your voice," and Nick leaned forward with a fatuous expression on his face which would have gained him a severe reprimand from most women.

This one merely shook her finger at him and went on.

"After the theater we went to Sherry's and had supper. Afterward we came directly home. I stepped into my carriage, escorted by three gentlemen, all of whom are above suspicion, and came from the restaurant to my home here. My footman opened the door and helped me to the stairs, for I was weary. When I came into this room and took off my cloak, I found my necklace missing."

Nick immediately pulled out a huge red notebook, hunted industriously for a pencil, wet its lead with his tongue and, readjusting his eyeglass, asked in a business-like way, slightly marred by his lisp:

"Can you give me a description of the ornament?"

"Yes, of course. It was a necklace of diamonds. There were twelve in the string, and five in the little cross pendant. Those in the necklace were all one and one-half carat, while those in the cross were three carat each. The stones were perfectly white, and flawless."

"This is a terrible loss!" exclaimed the detective.

"It is. Of course I have many jewels, but this one ornament was my favorite, for it was given me by Mr. Orleton on our wedding day. Now that he is dead, I have cherished my necklace beyond everything else."

"Of course you would, madam," Nick assented, allowing sympathetic tears to gather in his red-rimmed eyes.

"I cannot tell where or when it was taken," she continued, using her handkerchief to wipe her own eyes.

"There was no chance for anyone to get at you?" Nick asked, still lisping, and consulting the back of his red notebook, as though following a line of questioning.

"No. I was protected in every way. My little son was with me all the time. Of course I know it is foolish, and perhaps I am developing his precocity by taking him with me on such occasions, but I seldom move without him, the sweet little fellow. He is my only comfort," and the handkerchief went to her moist eyes once more.

Like the fool he was representing himself to be, Nick appeared to be overcome, and at last managed to stammer out:

"Really, Mrs. Orleton, you mustn't, don't you know. Comfort and consolation will come to you from every hand, and you will be as happy again as you always have been," and the sickly smile he gave her seemed to indicate that in his own person could this great joy be found.

Still again did the handsome woman make her ruin certain by warding off the compliment with the half-jesting, "Oh, hush."

And then she rang the bell.

"I will show you my darling," she said, smiling.

"I shall be most happy," Nick simpered.

"You must pardon a mother's partiality, but I think he is the most beautiful boy in the world," and she smiled sadly.

The servant who answered the bell was given orders to send Master Harry to his mother, and a moment later a boy entered the room.

He was a very handsome little chap, about fourteen years old, graceful as a woman, with great blue eyes, which looked straight into those of the person with whom he was speaking. His soft golden hair was worn a little long and brushed back from a wide, broad brow. The hands, rather small for a boy, were well cared for and white. He was exquisitely dressed, a little foppishly, but in excellent taste, and as he stood before his mother he bowed respectfully and asked:

"Do you want me, mamma?"

What memories that young, clear voice awakened in Nick Carter. His thoughts went back half a dozen years, and something like a feeling of pity arose in his heart for Mrs. Orleton and her son.

"Yes, darling, I wanted this gentleman to see you," the mother answered. "Shake hands with him, dear."

A white, soft left hand was extended frankly, and the blue eyes looked into the somewhat bleared ones of the detective, who, of course, lost his glass, as he awkwardly took the hand of the boy.

As Nick was covering up his keen gaze with this little byplay, he noticed several things.

One was that the boy was not looking at him, but beyond. He was not meeting his glance, but staring beyond it into space. Another thing which was very evident to the detective was the fact that while the boy

extended his left hand, he was not left-handed. He had closed the door behind him, as he came into the room, with his right hand, and when he addressed his mother he had settled his tie with the same hand.

Those eyes, which let nothing escape them, fell upon the boy's right hand while the left lay in his own right one, and he saw, between the thumb and forefinger, a blue discoloration. That little mark, not much bigger than the prick of a needle's point, spoke volumes, and yet nothing of his discovery was written upon his face as he asked the boy:

"Can you say anything about your mother's loss?"

The boy shook his head.

"No one could have taken the necklace, for I was with her all the time."

"Where did the diamonds go, then?" Nick asked, in a bewildered way.

"I think they were spirited away," he answered, gazing into space.

"The dear child believes in spirits," the mother explained.

"I do. Papa often talks to me," Harry answered, an angelic expression coming into his eyes.

"I laugh at the child, but he believes in spirits, and sometimes he makes my flesh creep with his ideas, don't you, dear?" drawing the boy toward her and pressing her lips to the smooth young cheek.

Nick arose. He had obtained all the information he wanted for this visit.

Bowing in his assumed confused way, he said, hesitatingly:

"I think I have done all I can. The chief may send some one else."

"Why need he? I think you will do very nicely. Tell him he is to send you back if there is any news. It is pleasant to talk to a gentleman on such matters," and she turned a very fetching glance upon him.

Surely it was cruel for her to exert her fascinations upon the young man as she did, for he seemed to lose all the little sense he was supposed to possess, and became so confused he could barely get out of the house. In his confusion, he stepped upon his hostess' dress, tore its dainty flounces to such an extent that even her good nature was disturbed and she uttered a little exclamation of annoyance.

"Hound!" was the term she applied, and Nick but added it to the evidence he had already accumulated, for he well remembered the one woman he had ever known who used that word upon every occasion when she was unduly excited.

As he left the house and hailed a cab, he saw a very disreputable newsboy leaning openly against a lamp-post, smoking a cigarette and whistling, between puffs, "All coons look alike to me."

As the cab started, the newsboy heard the disturbed-looking gentleman in it whistling "Yankee Doodle," and he knew that Nick Carter wished that he should maintain his watch.

## CHAPTER III.

### TEN-ICHI'S DISCOVERIES.

"Oh, what a lark!"

The silvery tones which nightly delighted thousands were heard by Ten-Ichi as he waited in an outer room while his card was being carried in to the celebrated English actress by her maid.

"You say it is a real Japanese, all togged out?" she asked.

The Oriental could not hear the maid's reply, but the voice of the actress was perfectly audible as she cried:

"Bring the little darling right in. Of course I will see him. I have always loved the dear little men and women. They are like lovely dolls."

If Ten-Ichi's royal nature rebelled, there was no trace of annoyance upon his impassive face as he was shown into the presence of the lovely actress, who drew thousands to see her, won royalty and amassed a fortune, and all before she had much more than passed her thirtieth birthday. However, as she looked eagerly at the Oriental, she did not look much over twenty, even with the bright sun shining upon her.

"A wonderful class of women, these actresses," Ten-Ichi thought, as he advanced, bowing almost to the ground, and saying in a soft, low tone, and in his native tongue:

"May my unworthy self presume to enter the presence of your most lovely and beautiful person, and to proffer my poor services?"

Miss Geraldine Summers, who, let it be whispered in secret, was really named Mary Jones, laughed merrily:

"Oh, you dear little man! How like your race! Are you really a Japanese?" and then followed half a dozen questions as to his birthplace, the time he had been in America and how he had happened to enter the police force, all of which Ten-Ichi answered as he deemed best, none of his replies, however, in any way approaching the truth.

"This is the best thing out," the actress continued, speaking English. "We have you Japanese everywhere. Soon you will own the world."

Ten-Ichi shook his head, and with half a dozen profound bows conveyed to her in the flowery language of his land that it would be impossible for Japan to conquer the world as long as the white races produced such honorable and exalted specimens of womanhood as she.

The actress was delighted, and after a little more time spent in this kind of conversation she readily entered into a description of her loss.

"You see, my lad," she said, genially, "I thought a

mighty lot of that sunburst. It was worth, well, let me see, I am bothered with American money."

"I understand the English system of currency," Ten-Ichi suggested, politely.

"Do you? All right, then. It cost fifty thousand pounds."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars," Ten-Ichi immediately responded.

"That's right, I fancy. Well, it was given to me some years ago by his then royal highness—oh, well, there is no need to mention names."

"None, most gracious lady."

"Well, for some months past the giver has been trying to get the jewels back. There are more than the sunburst, you understand."

"Is there any wonder?" asked the Oriental, expressing deepest homage in his finest attitude of respectful humility, as he stood before the actress, his hands folded upon his breast, his eyes lowered.

"When I missed that sunburst my suspicions were directed in a certain direction, but none of the people I have in mind were about at the time."

"Who could have commited the theft, then, most fascinating cherry blossom?" whispered the deferential Oriental, who from under his half-closed lids was taking in every detail of the somewhat disordered room, the careless costume of the actress, the remains of her light breakfast on a table and even her pet pug, who lay, his nose resting on her trailing blue gown of light silk.

"That's what you are to find out, you little idiot," was the rude response, as the actress drew out a cigarette case, and, selecting one of the paper tubes, placed it between her rosy lips.

"Smoke?" she asked, extending her case, which Ten-Ichi saw was of dull gold, with her monogram traced in magnificent diamonds.

"No? All right," she said, blowing a cloud of smoke in his eyes, and then settling back in her chair.

"Now I will tell you all about it, so you won't have to put any questions."

The Oriental bowed repeatedly.

"I played as usual last night, and made a great hit. In the last scene I wore a gorgeous dress, which cost five hundred pounds."

"Twenty-five hundred dollars?" Ten-Ichi again suggested, as though he were proud of his knowledge of both systems of currency.

"I fancy so. Well, to get along, or we will have a three-volume novel, or will it be a penny dreadful? As I said, I had on this stunning gown, and the bodice is cut awfully low, even for an actress. With it I wore my sunburst, fastened on my bosom. Invisible court plaster makes the gem stick as though it had grown there."

After referring to this manner of wearing her jewels she indicated a more peculiar one by smiling and displaying a diamond set in the ivory whiteness of one of her front teeth. Ten-Ichi shivered to himself, but preserved his impassive face.

"Now last night I wore no other jewel than the sunburst. It is too brilliant to wear with other gems. I went right from the theater, just stopping long enough to wash off my powder and rouge, and went with an awfully swell party to supper at Sherry's."

"Pardon me, most gracious lady, but may your lowly servant at your feet ask if the wines of this country had anything to do with the loss?"

The actress laughed again, displaying her shining tooth, and replied without any anger:

"No, sir. I keep my head always. If I did any amount of drinking, I'd lose my form, for we English women run to flesh, you know. No, I only drank a bottle of champagne."

The abstemious Oriental wondered, but he only bowed, and continued to listen.

"I did not stay very long, for I hate such parties, they are so dull. When I came up here, I found that my sunburst had been torn from my bosom. Its loss makes me feel like swearing," and she lit another cigarette.

"Who was there?" Ten-Ichi asked, surrounding this question, as well as subsequent ones, with the flowery language typical of the Japanese.

The list of names she gave included Mrs. Hilda Orleton and Miss Laura Winston.

Ten-Ichi was contented. He had found out what he wanted, and after listening to a description of the sunburst, which evidently was a very magnificent piece of jewelry, he left the actress and returned home.

Evil eyes were watching the little Oriental, however. An expert was shadowing him. No one not used to that kind of work could have done it so well or hidden his purpose from Ten-Ichi as thoroughly.

Quietly, yet thoroughly, he followed, and, leaving his cab a block below Nick Carter's house, he had the satisfaction of seeing the Japanese enter the front door as he walked on the opposite side.

However, he did not know that the wonderful little arrangement in Nick Carter's cellar was taking a series of pictures of him as he passed. A man has to be of extraordinary ability who can enter the lists with the world-famous detective and score any points.

No one knew this better than the man who shadowed Ten-Ichi, but he believed that he was the only man who could down the detective, his greatest enemy, and save the scheme his evil brain had formed.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OVER THE PHONE.

Chick and Ten-Ichi met in the office, but there was no sign of their chief.

"Nick ought to be back," Chick said, moving about a little restlessly.

"He ought," assented Ten-Ichi.

"Did you succeed?" Chick asked.

"I think the actress was really robbed," Ten-Ichi said, slowly.

"So was Miss Winston. She lost a string of pearls, magnificent ones, to judge from the description."

"She, too, was present at the theater party?"

"Oh, yes. Isn't it funny how these swells will dine and wine women not fit to associate with? I can't understand it. This Summers can't act, her morals are—well, they are best left alone, and she is a very ill-bred Englishwoman of very ordinary extraction," and Chick looked disgusted.

"She is all that you say, and something more."

"What's that?"

"A keen, shrewd, unscrupulous woman, who keeps everything she can lay her hands upon, and who does not care how much trouble and anxiety she causes others, so that her own ends are served."

"But she was really robbed?"

"Yes, I am sure of that. A woman may lie with her lips, in her actions, and with her eyes, but no matter how well trained she may be in the ways of deceit, she cannot lie with her voice."

"Why, old man, that's first rate," Chick cried.

"I have observed," the Oriental said, briefly.

"Well, the little society girl I went to see, cute, frisky, full of life and fun and ready for any amount of mischief, but harmless as a kitten, was robbed, too. She is frightened about it, because she is afraid her people will think it is a new dodge of hers. She confessed she had pawned some diamonds to get the money for her unsuccessful elopement."

"I see."

"Yes, so that makes it pretty ugly for her. Pity girls aren't trained better. Nice little thing, but left entirely to servants' care by her neglectful mother until she was brought out."

"Want to elope now?"

"No; she is ashamed of the whole thing. I thought the coachman might have a hand in the theft. Of course he was discharged without any recommendation, and this robbery might be for revenge."

"What did she think of such an idea?"

"She utterly refutes it. By the way, Ten-Ichi, I found out that the theft of these pearls is not the girl's first loss."

"So!"

"Yes, she says that half her jewelry has disappeared. She confided in me that many of her friends have been robbed. It seems that none of them go anywhere without losing something. She is frightened to death about it."

"A pretty state of things."

"You bet. Her parents are away, and she is in charge of an old aunt. Just think, they could leave the girl after their experience of this spring!"

"You Americans——" Ten-Ichi began, when he was silenced by a flash from Chick's eyes. Chick would not stand any criticisms of his own land from the Japanese, no matter what he might say himself.

"I tried to cheer her, but she is very much cast down. She does not care for the loss of the jewels as much as she fears her father's displeasure."

Ten-Ichi looked at the handsome young fellow, and smiled to himself. No wonder he had found no difficulty in gaining the young lady's confidence.

"I say, though," Chick said, restlessly, "where is Nick?"

"Yes, where is he?" Ten-Ichi mildly asked.

Chick's face darkened.

"That's the worst of you Oriental fellows," he said, hastily. "You do not seem to care anything about danger or death."

"What is to happen happens, no matter what we do or think," was the quiet answer.

"That may be, but I'm going to act and think at once, nevertheless," was the energetic answer, and Chick caught up the receiver.

Getting the chief of police on the phone, he asked if anything had been heard from Nick, but received an answer in the negative.

Nick had promised to return direct to the office, and it was now two hours after the time he had appointed for meeting his boys.

Before Chick could communicate the chief's answer to Ten-Ichi, Patsy came in, dressed like a young sport, with a great white sweater up to his ears and a little cap on his red hair.

"Seen Nick?"

"Yes, of course."

"Where?"

"Coming out of the Widow Orleton's princely abode."

"Stop your kidding, Patsy," Chick said, severely. "Nick promised to be here two hours ago."

"Say, haven't you heard from him yet?"

"Not a word."

Patsy whistled.

"I don't like that."

"Neither do I."

"But, you see, I think I know something," Patsy said, slowly.

"What, quick?"

"When he passed me, he gave me the signal, and I obeyed it, made for the other place, changed my duds and put in an appearance at the house. Saw the stunning widow and asked for the kid."

"What kid?"

"Her boy. I said I had a date with him to teach him boxing."

"Say, that wasn't bad."

"I don't think so. She insisted it was some mistake, but I was equally insistent, and at last she rang. Mamma's darling had gone out for a constitutional."

"Well, what of all this?"

"Though I did go to the other place, it is so near that I managed to keep my eyes on that house all the time, and no one left by either front or rear entrance."

"Perhaps the boy was in."

"I don't think so, for I imagine she would have liked to confront me with him to see what was my lay."

Ten-Ichi came forward.

"What do you think this shows?"

"That there is some underground passage from that house, or a secret room inside, or both. If there is, and this boy uses it, things aren't straight with the people."

"And Nick has come to some harm," Chick cried. The three looked at each other in horror.

Suddenly the bell rang, and all three rushed for the phone. Patsy got to the receiver first and placed it to his ear with feverish anxiety.

"Help, quick, No. 179——"

"Oh, confound it," cried Patsy, astonishing his companions.

"What is it?" they cried, in one voice.

"Hello, hello! I say, Central, don't disconnect. It's life and death. I say connect again. You don't know who it was? Confound you, I'll have you discharged. Why, it's Nick Carter's office. You can't tell? Well, you're a nice one."

"Quick, boy, what is it?" Chick cried, catching Patsy's arm.

"It was Nick on the wire. He cried 'Help, quick, No. 179,' and then he was cut off," was the despairing answer.

"I'd like to kill that girl," Chick said, through his teeth.

"Where did you see him?" Ten-Ichi asked, making for the directory.

Patsy told him.

"Not far from some old rookeries. See three blocks away on —— Street. It's a short street. Runs from 1 to 180. We have it. No. 179 —— Street. Know anything about it?" Ten-Ichi was excited.

"I should say we did," Patsy exclaimed. "It is a saloon run by the worst crook in New York. He has done time frequently, but he is in with the machine. His place has been cleaned out every other week, and yet somehow he keeps his license."

Chick's face had grown very grave, and unconsciously his voice took on a deeper tone, as he said, quietly:

"If Nick Carter is there, it's up to us to get him out. There are more pitfalls in that old rattletrap than in any other in the entire city. If he is there, diabolical skill has put him there, and we must meet that skill with something more diabolical. He asked for help quick."

"And he shall have it, even if I go to join him," Ten-Ichi said, solemnly.

Patsy made a gesture of displeasure, as he said, coldly:

"It goes without saying that we all will, although I don't think Nick Carter is done for yet by any means. He has not nine, but a thousand, lives."

"That may all be, but if fate wills it, they will avail him nothing," said the Japanese, with Oriental fatalism.

## CHAPTER V.

### POINTS OF FIRE.

As Nick Carter drove away from the house of Mrs. Orleton and turned the corner, thus passing out of Patsy's sight, he heard a loud, shrill cry, and the wail of an older person. There was a sickening sound of wheels on human flesh, and dark, red drops spattered against the windows of his cab.

In an instant he had checked the driver, and, opening the door, sprang out. There, just behind where the wheels had passed over its helpless little body, lay a child, probably about five, and wailing over it was a miserable old crone.

The child was a dirty, miserable bundle of rags, but that made no difference to Nick. It was a child, and one whom his cab had injured, perhaps killed. Bending over it, he lifted the little form in his arms, and spoke gently to the old woman:

"I cannot tell you how I regret this," he said, "but we will have the little one in a hospital in a few moments, and I will see that it has the best of care."

The old woman raised her face, displaying dirt and tears intermingled. How was Nick to know that she had deliberately thrust the little one under the cab because of orders, accompanied by a few dollars, given her a few minutes before?

"No, no," screamed the old woman. "He shall not go to the hospital. I will take him home."

Wondering, as he often did, at the attitude of the poor toward hospitals, Nick made no objection, but asked, simply:

"Where do you live? I will carry the little one for you."

"I will show you," the woman replied, setting off at a smart pace, and, telling the cabby to wait for him, Nick set out to follow her.

It was a time of misery for the great detective, for he loved children, and could not bear to see one suffer. From the appearance of the child, he feared that he had seriously injured the little one, and his voice was tender as a woman's as he encouraged the tiny mite, who, in spite of the pain, was conscious, and endured its suffering like a little Spartan.

Absorbed in his burden, Nick did not pay special attention to his whereabouts, but simply followed the old

woman, who hobbled through an alley and into a rambling building.

"In here, kind gentleman," she said, in a wheezing voice, opening a door and pointing into a dark and dingy room.

Nick entered unhesitatingly, and was looking about for some place to lay the child, when it was snatched from him. He started, but the floor gave way beneath him, and he fell headlong into space, and for a time knew nothing.

When his senses returned he found himself in an underground passage, fitted up as a kind of office. With his head throbbing and his whole body bruised by his fall, he noticed various objects, and, to his delight, saw a telephone on one of the desks. Then, in a flash, he knew where he was, in the basement of the old crib at No. 179 —— Street. He remembered this very office, for he had entered it before in pursuit of some counterfeiters.

Springing to the telephone, he snatched up the receiver, and just managed to get connection with his own office when he heard steps outside.

"For Heaven's sake, stop him, he is telephoning," cried a hoarse voice, but before the detective could be prevented he managed to utter the few words heard by Patsy. Then a brawny hand was laid over his mouth, and the receiver rattled as it fell upon the desk.

Baffled, he looked up calmly into his captor's face, then said, with a smile which was maddening:

"I knew I was not mistaken, 'Buck' White, when I recognized Carrie this morning."

The man, who held Nick's powerful arms behind his back with a contrivance made of steel, looked amazed, as he asked:

"You say you recognized her! How did you do it?"

"The disguise is pretty good," Nick admitted, calmly, wondering how he could release himself. "Carrie had brown hair, a nose which was tiplifted, and she was fully four inches shorter than Mrs. Orleton, while her skin was of a muddy hue. Classic noses, dark or bleached hair are easily produced, and high-heeled shoes go far to raise a woman. Her complexion is lovely. She has had to give up wine and good eating to get that, though."

"How did you recognize her?" the man persisted. He had thought the disguise so perfect that he wanted to know the flaw in it.

"I never forget little personal habits. Your wife's 'Oh, hush' is something which lingers in a man's mind, Buck."

Nick had so piled up the evidence against these two while in Chicago some years before that they had been compelled to spend a portion of their time at Joliet. They had been convicted in a number of robberies, and but little of the money had been recovered. Nick was sure at the time that they had hidden it, and now he found that his surmises had been correct.

"Might I ask how you detected me?" he asked, quite as curious on his part.

"Didn't until you picked up the kid," was the quick reply. "The detective you pretended to be would never have bothered. Nick Carter wouldn't let a cat die if he could help it, but he will run down his fellow men like a demon."

Nick looked sober.

"Not unless they deserve it, Buck. But who is this with you?"

The man laughed.

"As you aren't going to get out of this, I don't mind telling you. It's Oppie, the Devil."

Nick's brows contracted. For years he had been endeavoring to trace some baffling crimes to the door of this man, who displayed a genius which, if applied to something legitimate, might have made him a useful and respected citizen instead of a criminal with a price on his head.

"I admire your taste, Buck," he said, gravely. "I thought you and Carrie were a trifle above such men as he."

The man uttered an oath, and gave the trap a pull.

"Cut that out," he growled. "Carrie is moving with the best, and by the time we get through——"

"She'll run off with Oppie, and leave you and your boy in the lurch," Nick broke in.

"Not on your life. I'm not hollering about the hold I've got on both of them, but I'm safe."

"Perhaps," Nick replied.

Again the man swore, and then sneeringly remarked, as he pulled the great detective after him:

"It doesn't make much diff what you think, for we will have the distinction of sending you to glory, and our plans won't go amiss."

"Won't they? Others have thought the same, but I am still here," Nick remarked, cheerfully, although he knew he was in grave peril.

"All right, think just what you want, and save yourself if you can," the man cried, opening a door and pushing Nick through it.

For the second time the detective fell, but the drop was only a short distance.

As he struck bottom he landed on a pile of dirty straw, fetid with a strange, animal-like odor.

It was horribly dark, and he was held by the ingenious trap binding his arms.

In vain Nick strained his eyes, but for the moment could see nothing.

Suddenly two points of fire shone out of the darkness. There was a rustle at the other end of the room.

Brave as he is, Nick held his breath and muttered to himself: "This is the limit," for the character of his surroundings was explained by a low growl.

He instantly recognized what the point of fire meant. Nick Carter, utterly helpless, had been thrown into a den of wild beasts, and death seemed inevitable.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BETWEEN THE STORIES.

A very handsome man was sitting in an easy-chair, glancing over some figures. That is, he was handsome when the left side of his face was seen, but the right cheek showed a terrible scar. A bullet from the revolver of Nick Carter had made that mark, and Oppie, the Devil, as he was known, had never forgiven the great detective. The man had managed to avoid capture, but the injury to his good looks, of which he was as proud as any woman, he had never forgiven.

A fortune had been spent upon that cheek of his, but no facial doctor could graft skin enough to fill up the furrow, and he knew he must go down to his grave a marked man.

A frown overspread his features as he looked at the figures. Evidently they did not suit him, for at last he placed his mouth to a tube within reach of his chair and whistled. Some response was evidently made, for he said, sharply:

"Send up the kid."

The room in which he sat was a peculiar one, being circular in shape, without windows, although perfectly light. Had the house in which the Widow Orleton made her home been carefully examined, it would have been found that while the ceilings in the rooms on the first two floors were very high, those of the rooms on the third and fourth were scarcely high enough to allow a man of six feet to walk upright, although, from the outside, the same distance seemed to exist between the stories. There was also considerable distance between the fourth story and the roof. Inside, it would have required skill of an exceptional nature, combined with a full knowledge of architecture, to account for the space confined by the old brick walls.

In the midst of the house, occupying all the unused room, stolen, as it were, from the third and fourth floors and the roof, was this circular room, approached by a perfect labyrinth of passages and lighted from above, where a skylight let in air and light.

This was the general assembly room and office of as desperate and skillful a gang of criminals as New York ever knew.

Their head and most arrogant member was the man with the scarred face, who sat waiting for the boy whom he had summoned.

There was no sound when a panel flew back in the circular walls and the blue-eyed boy, whom Nick had seen but a couple of hours before, stepped into the room.

It was an unusually fine face for a boy, now even without any counterfeit expression. The red lips parted; there was a strained expression in the eyes, and the hands trembled, although their owner tried to disguise the fact by holding them firmly, one with the other.

"You wanted me?" he asked, in a lifeless tone.

"Just so," was the snarling answer.

The boy let go of his hands, and pulled forward a stool, using his right hand.

A sharp command from his companion startled him, and he drew back the right hand and used the left.

"How many times will you have to be told?" was the question.

"I try to remember," came in frightened and tired accents.

"I wanted you because I am not satisfied with these figures," continued the man, as the boy seated himself.

The latter studied his delicate fingers, white and tapering, with tips bent back, acutely sensitive to the touch of every object.

"Aren't they correct?" the boy asked, passing his right hand wearily over his brow.

The man did not see the motion, for he was again bending over the bits of paper.

"Your additions are all right, but the amounts are not large enough. With the opportunities you have had, you ought to have done much better."

"I have done my best," the boy insisted, coughing wearily.

"What are you doing that for?"

"What?"

"Coughing."

Anger kindled in the eyes, and the boy sprang to his feet.

"I am coughing because I caught cold hanging about Nick Carter's. I'm about done up as it is, and if I don't have a little rest, you can hunt for another 'dip.' I'm about sick of the whole thing, anyway."

"What's this?" shouted the man.

"Yes, I'm sick and tired of the whole thing. What good does it do me? I had a better time at the school," glancing at the curious blue mark on his right hand. "Then I learned a little."

"Well, what are you doing now but learning?"

"How to land in the pen?" sneeringly questioned the boy.

"See here," the man began, advancing with threatening gesture, but the boy sprang nimbly aside.

"No, you don't. You've hit me for the last time. I'm dead tired of this layout, and I'll put you next to another good thing. If I'm to be beaten, it's going to be by the school folks, and not by you, see?"

An uneasy expression came over the face of the scoundrel, and he asked, soothingly:

"Come, come, boy, we're friends, ain't we?"

"Oh, I don't care," the boy replied, sullenly.

"We are all proud of you. What would the gang do without you?"

"That's just it. I'm the whole thing, and I want you to know it," was the quick answer. "Treat me white, or I'll squeal."

"By Heaven," the man cried, springing from his seat. "I mean it. Oh, no, you can't frighten me. Do you remember what you did to me three years ago? I haven't forgotten."

"I'll do worse, you brat; get out of here," was the quick answer. Oppie, the Devil, was beside himself.

"What's worse than beating me continually with the first thing you lay hands upon?" queried the child.

"Wait and find out," the man replied.

The boy hesitated, then said, slowly:

"I'll tell you one thing, and you can put it in your mouth and chew over it—I ain't going out again."

"The dickens you ain't!"

"That's the stuff. Make your plans as you will, I'm through. Last night was the last. Maybe you think I don't know much and can be imposed upon, beaten within an inch of my life and made your slave!" and before the man could reach him the boy had disappeared through the panel.

"Needs some pretty severe discipline," he muttered, savagely, turning back to his desk.

"Better not strain the line you have upon him," suggested a harsh voice, and Oppie, the Devil, looked into the eyes of the man Nick Carter had called Buck White.

An eager, evil expression came into the dark eyes of the man, who kept his left cheek turned toward his companion to hide his disfigurement, as he asked, hastily:

"Well?"

"It is well, or wrong, as you want to look at it."

"Nick Carter is dead, then?

"That cur, that low-down spy, that human Bloodhound!" the man cried, using a string of oaths.

Buck shivered a little.

"Don't, Oppie. I did for him as you commanded, but, now that he's dead, let's respect his memory."

The man laughed long and deep.

"Respect the memory of Nick Carter!" he cried, the tears running down his cheeks.

"Yes. He never did any man dirt. If he sent any of us over the line, we deserved it, and much more. I say you've got to respect him, or I'll peach."

It was strange that one man could have it in his power to make the other cower as he did, yet there are queer contradictions among men of this class. Some years before, Oppie had been very successful in making and passing the "queer," and Buck retained full proof of his crime.

Utterly indifferent as he was to State laws, this dangerous, desperate criminal feared those of the United States Government. He had managed to involve the woman Carrie and she also shared his fear. This was the hold of which Buck had boasted to Nick.

"What's the matter? Here's that little viper threatening to squeal, and now you try to bluff me," Oppie said at last, trying to overcome the fear he certainly felt.

"Matter? We are all good and tired of your hand of iron and steel. I've done as you said, and I hope you are satisfied."

"Oh, well, let's not fight among ourselves. A few days more, and we will be out of this, and a pretty good haul we have made of it."

"I don't like one thing."

"What's the matter now?" snarled Oppie, rising to his feet and going over to a picture set in the wall. Pressing upon an innocent looking knob on a panel, there was a slight whir and the canvas rolled back, disclosing a little vault, cunningly built in the wall. Opening it, he drew forth a glittering mass of jewels, worth a vast fortune.

Buck looked on indifferently. Money was nothing to him. It was peculiar how little he cared personally for what his wife and son were willing to risk their lives.

"Matter?" he said, slowly, answering Oppie's question. "Why, this putting away of Nick Carter. He was so brave, that I no sooner let him drop than I would have given a good deal to get him back, but I did not dare go down among them."

"They were good and hungry?"

"Nothing to eat for three days."

The man with the scarred face chuckled, letting the gems drop through his fingers, as he said:

"A good piece of work! With Nick Carter's bones licked clean in that cage of hunger-mad lions, we are perfectly safe from discovery."

His rejoicing would have been different had he heard a remark which had been made that very moment in Nick Carter's office by a man who looked a little the worse for wear.

"Well, boys, this is the limit without any manner of doubt, for I've been a regular Daniel, only there was no audience to watch my escape."

As it was, Oppie, the Devil, laughed over the jewels Buck's wife had pretended to lose, and was indifferent

to the fact that Nick had not seriously injured the child which had been thrown in his way by Buck's orders.

"I'm glad, though," the latter said, gruffly, "for one murder is enough."

## CHAPTER VII.

### NICK SURPRISES HIS ASSISTANTS.

When the three assistants of the great detective set forth in response to his appeal for help they did not go out together. From the basement of Nick Carter's house were many exits. Some ran through tunnels lighted by electric light, others opened into the rear of stores, several of which were owned by Nick, and conducted by men whom he had befriended and who would have given their lives for him. After years of careful planning, he had made his house a place in which he could carry on his work, and to which he could return without being spotted by the various criminals who seemed to be constantly upon his trail.

Therefore it was an easy matter for the three young detectives, all thoroughly disguised, to leave by different ways and meet at a common point, which happened to be the very spot where Nick had left his cab to go into the house with the injured child in his arms.

When they arrived, almost at the same moment, at the place where the cab was still standing they noticed the driver dozing on his seat, while in the middle of the street a puddle of human blood met their horrified gaze.

Chick went up, and, touching the man on the shoulder, asked, harshly:

"What are you doing here?"

Nick and Chick had voices very much alike at times. The man, half awake, replied:

"Yis, sur, and what is it?"

"Wake up, you dub," Chick thundered, and the man found himself looking into the face of a very different appearing man than the one he was waiting for.

Chick had on a disguise he often affected, that of a middle-aged sport, a little the worse for liquor, who had made a good thing backing the ponies and was out for all he could get.

The cabman could only stare. Patsy chimed in, affecting the character of a fashionable young chap, who had become an easy victim to the wiles of the sport at his side.

"Hustle, will ye! Crank it out, or I'll give you one under the jaw which you won't forget in a hurry."

Even Ten-Ichi, that most conservative of men, who looked the little Italian boy to perfection, with his tray of plaster images, frowned and said, quickly:

"Answer, and be quick about it."

"Spake, cough out, till what? Shure, an' it's meself that asks youse what all the excitement is about."

Realizing that the cabman was in the right, Chick asked who he was waiting for, and after some trouble gained the much-needed information. The cabman told them of the accident, but indignantly protested that it was not his fault.

"Not your fault, how's that?" Patsy asked, eagerly.

The cabman surprised the detectives by saying that he had seen the old woman throw the child under the horse's feet, and that before he could stop the cab had run over the child.

All three shivered. Accustomed as they were to sights of wicked deeds, this seemed too inhuman to believe.

"What would they want to kill a child for?" Patsy asked, slowly.

"They knew they could entice Nick Carter with an injured child," Ten-Ichi said, decidedly.

"That's a fact," Chick admitted, then added, looking about him:

"This is a good place. Few people are passing. Here, Pat, we'll take the cab, and pay you for the trouble. The gentleman is a friend of ours, and we may need you." Then, turning to Patsy: "You stay here with him, and wait."

Patsy wanted to make vigorous protest, but when Chick spoke in that tone he knew he had better keep still, and his disguise was not exactly fitted for explorations among the dens inhabited by the people of whom they were in search.

It was not a difficult matter for Chick and Ten-Ichi to follow in Nick's footsteps, for something had happened of which the demons who had laid their frightful plans had no cognizance. As he walked along, following the old woman and carrying the child, Nick had left a trail the dullest could have followed. The crushed and bleeding body of the little one had left drops of blood along the passageway. By the flash of their dark lanterns they followed the trail of crimson stains into the depths of the noisome dive.

After they had felt their way carefully for some distance, Chick's keen eyes detected in the deep dust the mark of a blanket or quilt, in which the child had evidently been wrapped.

"Here he was trapped," Chick said, hoarsely, and Ten-Ichi nodded. But, search as they might, they could not discover any other opening into the passage than the one by which they had entered. At last they left the entrance and began a systematic search of the house. If there were pitfalls in it they were well covered, for the men could not discover any indications, though they searched a long time.

While Ten-Ichi went to report their failure to Patsy, Chick hurried to the nearest telephone booth and called up Nick Carter's house.

To his amazement and delight, Nick himself answered, and with the glad knowledge that their beloved chief was safe, Chick ran back to his companions, jumped into the cab, and, throwing a ten-dollar bill to the cabby, exclaimed:

"Drive like mad."

In his excitement he was uncautious enough to give the driver the number of Nick Carter's house; and upon arriving at the front door, bolted in instead of entering by a secret way.

They scrambled upstairs, wild to see Nick, and to assure themselves that he was not harmed.

They tumbled into the office and saw Nick lying back in his Morris chair. Though his face was a little pale, and his clothing torn in places, there were no signs of the great danger he had just passed through. Even the eyeglass which he had used so effectively in his disguise hung unbroken by its string, although it had gone with its owner down into the very jaws of death—death in one of the most horrible forms.

As Nick saw his boys, and noted by their eager expression that they had been wildly anxious about him, he smiled genially and remarked:

"Well, boys, this is the limit without any manner of doubt, for I've been a regular Daniel, only there was no audience to watch my escape."

Then in answer to their questioning, he began the story of his wonderful escape from a den of lions, made mad by hunger.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOW NICK ESCAPED.

"Yes, I have had an experience, and I think it is just about all I want," Nick continued, smiling at his assistants as they eagerly crowded about him.

"No, I am not at all hurt, aside from a few bruises, and I am beginning to think they are the sign manual of our profession. My feelings are damaged somewhat, but when we round up this gang of precious scoundrels, it will act as a soothing balm for what I have just gone through."

"Aw, cut your fooling," Patsy cried, "and spiel us the story."

"I'm telling you as fast as I can," Nick retorted, with a merry expression in his eyes; then, dropping his joking air, he said very impressively:

"I will never be nearer death than I have been today, and come out unharmed."

"Where did they put you?" Chick asked.

"It must have been somewhere near that hallway," Ten-Ichi said, in a tone of conviction, "because the trail of blood led straight to it."

"Right you are; they did secrete me in that hallway, or rather below it."

"We went all through it, and didn't find a single trap," Chick cried. "Remember, Nick, when we went through that house on that stolen bonds matter? The whole place was rotton with traps of all kinds, and I thought I knew every knob, and to-day, couldn't find a one. Well, it fairly staggered me."

"New crowd in charge. The building has been a great deal changed since then. Where clumsy knobs and creaking machinery once did service, now electricity is working its contrivances, and it is much more difficult to detect false floors, doors which swing both ways, chairs fastened to the floor and connected with powerful batteries, and such appliances of the criminal class, than it used to be."

"Then they are all there?" Patsy asked.

"Yes, and many more, I have no doubt. Did you ever notice that as civilization advances, and we grow more refined in our virtues, crime becomes more intricate? But the criminal always comes to grief, sooner or later, no matter how shrewd he may be.

"As criminals become more intelligent and use scientific contrivances, we must use superior knowledge and greater cunning to checkmate them in their dastardly careers," said Nick.

"This isn't the story," Patsy mildly suggested.

"It isn't, but you shall have it," was the answer; and in

a few words Nick told of his adventures, stating that he was sure the child had been thrown beneath his cab to impede its progress and afford an excuse for enticing him into the strange house.

He continued his story, and held his listeners breathless as he described his frantic dash to the telephone, his being caught in the trap, and his fall into the den of lions.

The three men displayed their emotions differently:

Chick turned white under his tan, and clinched his teeth; Patsy doubled up his fists, and began calling their foes very uncomplimentary names under his breath, while Ten-Ichi remarked placidly:

"But you have returned."

Nick smiled as he heard this, but said nothing as his eyes dwelt upon Chick, his most deeply loved assistant, who was fast becoming an exact copy of his own illustrious self.

"True, I have returned, as you say, Ten-Ichi, but it is due to a new power I never knew I possessed, or rather never thought anything about it.

"When I fell upon that filthy straw, saw the gleaming balls of fire approaching, and heard the mad roar of the lion, as he came toward me, I felt that my time had come. It made a frightful spring. I had stiffened all my muscles, made them as firm as I could, and waited for the animal to leap. I was not seriously hurt, though I expected to be crushed like paper, in one's hand. His weight bore me to the ground and I lay there stunned; but only for a moment.

"In the second which passed, I remember that as a boy, I could always draw birds to me; that snakes were rendered harmless when I spoke to them, and I began to say over and over again, in a deep, clear voice of command:

"'I am your king. I am your king. I am your king.'

"There appeared to be some magnetic quality in the tone of my voice which affected him, for if you will believe it, that great beast made no further attempt to attack me. But he and his mate instantly lay down at my feet. If I had not witnessed it myself I could not have believed it. They even allowed me to handle their little one, about six months old, I should judge; but I never stopped talking, and I rubbed their unkempt coats, showing not the slightest fear, although I was almost stifled by the stench of the cage. As I saw how majestic they were in their confinement and hunger, for I believe they were starving, I felt how superior they were in all their animal ferocity to the men who threw me to them to compass my death."

"Nick Carter, I believe you would love a snake," Patsy cried.

"Perhaps I would if it rendered me a service, and I knew it was being ill treated."

Chick looked at his chief with a bright light in his eyes.

"We have known of plenty of cases where he has taken human snakes to his bosom."

"And I can't say that any of them have bitten me for warming them," Nick said, quietly; then continuing:

"Still talking to my new friends, for I actually so regarded them, I threw off the shackles which had become loosened, and finally found the door through which food was thrown to the animals. It was large enough for me to squeeze through. I made for a meat market, bought about half a beef, slipped back and had the satisfaction of leaving my friend and his family plentifully supplied with food, and then I took a cab for home."

"Bully," Patsy cried, waving his arms over his head.

"Did you say those shackles had hurt you?" Chick asked, gravely. "Off with your things and let me see."

After remonstrating for a moment, Nick complied. They were horrified at seeing his perfect arms lacerated and covered with black and blue spots. A physician, whom Nick usually summoned in case of accidents, was called in regardless of Nick's protests. Knowing the detective's secretive manner, he asked no questions, but attended to his work, and left. As he went down the steps, however, he thought:

"I would not be that man for a great deal." And yet, although he did not realize it, Nick Carter saves more lives in a year than the physician had in his whole life.

Within Nick was planning a vigorous campaign, and, as a beginning, he promised to stay indoors for that day and let the others work, while he recovered from his fatigue and wounds.

Scarcely had his lads left him, when he began opening his stack of correspondence. Suddenly he started. Mention has been made of a certain earl who desired his assistance upon a very secret and important matter. He found information relating to this very question, and, as he read the letters and documents, he looked serious. Suddenly his face lit up with a smile, and he said half aloud:

"Funny how cases run together. Who would imagine such a thing? Perhaps I may serve you, my lord, and yet in a way you would scarcely dream of."

Leaning back in his chair, and endeavoring to forget his aching shoulders, Nick began to follow in his mind the plan of the old house in which he had so nearly met his death.

"The floor and doors were operated by electricity.

"But the question is, where is that dynamo located? Not within those walls. Of that I am sure. The dynamo furnishing the power is just as likely as not three or four blocks away. There must be at least fifty underground passages leading from that house to various places."

Suddenly Nick sat up, his eyes flashing. He remembered the house in which he had interviewed Mrs. Orleton. By the streets it was three blocks from the rookery, but as the crow flies, it was barely a block. Nick had several times wondered at this house. It had once been in the possession of a friend of his, a recluse, who often used to remark upon its curious construction. When his friend had made it his home, this curious house had two upper stories like attics, a tarred roof covering the whole; but they had often thought that there must be a room in the center of the house. Many a time had they searched for a secret panel, but had not been successful. Nick remembered all this, and he brought his fist down upon his desk with a force which made him wince:

"By Jove, that is the real headquarters. In that place the dynamo is located. And, besides, in that secret chamber, the plots of robbery and murder are hatched. I think I hold the threads in my hands. Terrible, terrible, how desperate criminals become, and many of them once honorable men and women. But the boy! Poor little chap, it's a shame, and yet he has served his term in a reform school. That blue mark on his right hand tells the story to all those who know how to read."

Nick Carter had remained in his chair only a short time, for he could not stay quiet while there was work for him to do. He did not know what new atrocities might be committed while he was resting.

"I must look after these people, and prevent them from preying upon their unsuspecting fellow beings," he thought as he pulled on a mackintosh. It was raining steadily; he jerked an old hat over his eyes, which he covered with a pair of smoked glasses, and with this primitive disguise, all he really felt able to assume for the moment, time was so urgent, the greatest detective in the world went forth.

## CHAPTER IX.

### WHAT PATSY LEARNED.

"And might I ask who you are?"

"You might."

"Will you answer?"

"I will."

"Oh, bosh! I mean will you tell the truth?"

"I will try."

"Well, why don't you try?"

"Try what?"

"To tell the truth."

"In what way?"

"Why, by telling me who you are."

"You have not asked me yet."

"See here," came in a half laughing, half angry tone, "I am not used to being made game of in this way."

"Neither am I."

"Well, Mr. Man, if it may please your honor, who are you?"

"Nick Carter," came the quiet answer.

"Nick Carter!" the words came with a little gasp.

"Yes, Miss Summers, Nick Carter; but why does my name startle you?"

"Oh, there is no occasion for my being startled, except that I have heard such stories of your skill and fame that I was overcome at the honor you are doing me," and the handsome actress made him a low courtesy.

There was a slight smile upon Nick's lips, as he looked at her, and wondered, as he often did, at the madness of some men drawn to a woman whose only attraction is beauty. A great man had seen enough in this woman with her bold good looks, her unrefined manners, to place serious interests in her hands, interests which he must protect, for Nick had sent this cablegram to the earl:

"Will do what I can. CARTER."

And that meant a good deal, not only to the earl, but others of nobler blood than he.

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Boys sent to the John Worthy School at Chicago are tattooed. A spade a little larger than the point of a needle is made upon the right hand, between the thumb and index finger. If returned, the mark is made a little larger. Anyone conversant with this method can tell how often the boy has been in the school. This fact is not very generally known. It is pitiful to see the number of little chaps of twelve and thirteen with this betraying mark on their right hands.

"Miss Summers, I have heard of your ability as an actress, but we are not in a theater," Nick suggested.

"Mr. Carter, the greatest playwright the world has ever known, mentions something about our always being on a stage."

Nick bowed. His smoked glasses were in his hand. His hat and mackintosh he had left in the hall. He was himself, handsome, dashing Nick Carter, whose manly comeliness more than one woman had admired. The actress, who had enchanted so many men, felt piqued that she made no impression upon this noble and wonderful man, and she redoubled her smiles. Admiration was the very spice of her life.

Nick stopped her with a slight wave of the hand.

"Excuse me, madam," he said, quietly, "but I am very busy just now, and have come to disturb your business affairs by taking up your time, only because my mission is an important one. Will you be seated, allowing me to sit down, and listen to what I have to say?"

Nick was beginning to feel faint, and thought that perhaps his physician had not correctly diagnosed his case. But he quickly recovered himself for the work at hand.

The actress, with a sulky expression, sank into an easy-chair. Ten years seemed to be added to her age as she sat there. Evidently she knew what was wanted.

"Miss Summers," he began, gravely, "I am here upon several matters. You have lost jewels lately?"

"A sunburst."

"No others?"

The actress hesitated, then she replied, slowly:

"Oh, yes, a few; who told you?"

"It is enough that I know. Why did you not report your loss?"

"Because I didn't care to do so."

"Perhaps you did not care to call the attention of the police to you just now?" Nick suggested.

"How dare you!"

Nick smiled. "Men of my profession dare everything. Now to be brief. You have lost some jewels in the past. What was their value?"

"A couple of thousand, perhaps," was the sulky answer.

"You cannot this sunburst and some other very valuable jewels given you by a certain illustrious person, one being his picture painted upon ivory, and surrounded by diamonds."

The actress nodded, and a malicious gleam came into her eyes.

"And no one will get them from me," she said.

"I think I will."

"You!" the woman screamed.

"Yes, I. Now I make my proposition. Before you go on the stage to-night, I will return you the other jewels you have lost, pay over to you one hundred thousand dollars, and give you my promise that nothing of the affair will get into the papers. In return I will keep the sunburst and you will give me all the jewels bestowed upon you by this unnamed royal personage."

The actress laughed derisively.

"If you do not," continued Nick, sternly, "I will have you arrested for retaining goods merely loaned you, not given you."

This threat to have her arrested was a bold bluff on Nick's part, but he knew how little women, especially English women, know about criminal law.

It worked to a finish, for the woman, turning deadly pale, asked with trembling lips:

"How could you have me arrested?"

"For retaining goods that do not belong to you. That is theft."

The actress plainly showed how this shot told. She had a woman's true fear of the majesty of the law. What foreign magnates and their representatives could not effect, Nick accomplished by a little skillful manipulation of a woman's ignorance and fear of the unknown.

"Is it a bargain?" he asked, rising.

"I suppose so."

"I thank you, for it would have given me pain to arrest so charming a lady," Nick said, bowing politely, although he suffered tortures from his shoulders in so doing.

"How do you know I will keep my promise?" the actress asked, rising also.

"Your past shows, Mary Jones, that whatever else you may have done, you have never yet broken a promise," Nick returned, sternly, and that mention of her legal name entirely finished his subjection of the actress.

"I will be on hand at six to-night," he said, gravely, and she nodded, still very sulky, and looking old and worn.

"I'll come on time," she said, briefly; but after he had

left, she wondered what had been his power. Still, she had no intention of not keeping her word. That was her one virtue; she had never told a lie in all of her rather exciting life.

Well satisfied with the result of his diplomacy, Nick took a cab and was driven to the office of a celebrated physician. There his wounds were again dressed, and he came out feeling refreshed and ready for action.

Returning home, he gathered his assistants about him and listened to their reports.

Chick and Ten-Ichi had gone once more to the den, and searched it throughout. They had then entered the saloon, and forced from the proprietor an admission that the house in the rear had recently undergone some very extensive repairs. He allowed them to pass into the basement through a secret door. The detectives walked through various rooms, which held in their dusky recesses evidences of many an unexplained crime. They heard the roars of the lion and his mate, and shuddered as they reflected that but for his strange power, Nick Carter's mangled remains would be lying beneath the feet of these savage beasts. They boldly went into passage after passage, and finally pursued one which led directly to the basement of the house at No. 786 Riverside Drive.

"We have marked the passage we want," Chick added.

"And our friend the saloon keeper?"

Ten-Ichi laughed a low, cunning laugh.

"He'll not betray us. Years ago he was a sailor. While he was second mate of a vessel in the Oriental merchant trade, he stopped at Hong Kong, and there wronged the wife of a Chinese merchant.

"The Chinese avenge any wrong to their women in a manner our nation would do well to copy. They caught this mate and branded his face with a red-hot iron. He will carry the mark to his grave."

"What a strange punishment."

"Yes; and the peculiar shape of the scar leads to easy detection if the criminal is wanted again by the authorities. He has a fear of letting people know why it was placed there. He will not betray us. I promised to keep his secret if he kept ours. That is the reason we felt so safe in exploring the cellars with him above, and perhaps in direct communication with his pals."

"And you, Patsy?"

Patsy's face assumed an injured expression. They all knew when he looked like that they would hear something.

"See here, Nick, I don't mind much making love to a girl," he began, "when she is any way decent-looking."

"I should remark not," Chick muttered, and the others smiled, for Patsy had a true Irishman's appreciation of love-making.

"But, I say, I'm blamed if I can stand much like the dose handed out to me to-day," and the scamp wiped his brow in pretended misery. "However, although the beaut stands six foot, is forty if she's a day, has a mustache better than I will ever own, I managed to impress her with my devotion, and, within half an hour, I was sitting in the kitchen as smart as you please. While I was there eating some mighty good pie, I heard a woman's voice several times, and then Patsy de Mick begins his little stunt."

The others were all convulsed with mirth. Patsy's reports were always overwhelmingly funny, as well as being extremely important.

"I opened my throat, expanded my vocal chords, not at all damaged by the delicious pie, and, imitating the voice I heard, I called my dear love from my side."

"Bet you did it to the life," Chick broke in, for he was very proud of Patsy's powers of imitation, which often stood them in such good stead.

"Sure. What's the use of doing a thing unless you turn out a first-class article? Well, to get to the point, I sent my six-footer flying from my side, and the ground was mine own. I just nosed things over, and you're right, Nick, there is a secret chamber in the middle of the house. It is reached by an inside stairway, making several turns and twists. This stairway connects my lady's bedroom with a room used as the library, and also communicates with the cellar. The doors are ordinary ones, such as might belong to any innocent closet. These doors are fitted on the inside with wires, and are charged with electricity. I think there is a switch somewhere in the library. Anyway, it will be easy to pick the locks and get in.

"The roof has a big skylight, and I suppose this lights the secret room. Probably it is charged, too."

"But the current?" Ten-Ichi asked.

Nick said nothing. He knew that Patsy had something more to tell.

"The current won't hurt any of us, if we make our mosy right away if not sooner."

"Why not?"

"Oh, just because when the dynamo is out of business, the current doesn't get in its good work."

Nick smiled. This was what he was waiting for.

"Good boy, Pat," Chick cried, clapping Patsy on the shoulder.

"Yes, I think so," Patsy replied, modestly; "I'm about the limit in smart boys. That dynamo is right under the secret room, as I make it out."

"In that sheet-iron furnace?" Chick asked.

Patsy nodded. "It didn't take me long to attend to its wants. I'm not an electrician for nothing. I managed to throw it out so that it can't be fixed for a couple of days."

"We'll go at once," Nick said, rising to his feet.

The others jumped up, and began preparations.

"What's the matter, Patsy?" Nick asked, looking at the boy, who had a rather depressed expression on his usually animated face.

"Why, Nick, it hurt me to throw that dynamo out of business," Patsy admitted, shamefacedly. "It was such a fine one."

Nick did not laugh, for he understood the lad. Being a born machinist, his love for anything mechanical was only equaled by his pride in his profession, and to him wonderful machines and contrivances were almost human, and much more worthy of consideration than the men and women with whom he was brought into contact, while working to protect society against evildoers.

## CHAPTER X.

### HARRY'S RESOLVES.

A reception was at its height. Ladies of social position and power were moving about, serene in their realization of power and beauty. There was a blaze of color, a glitter of jewels, and in the midst of it all Mrs. Hilda Orleton glided from place to place with her son at her side.

"What a charming woman," one gentleman exclaimed, looking at the beautiful woman, as she bent her stately head to whisper something to her fair-haired boy.

"She is charming but why does she take that boy to a function like this. He ought to be in bed," answered his companion.

"Few women of her youthful appearance would be willing to acknowledge that she had a boy as old as he."

"Very few. The majority would handle him off out of sight."

"Bad for the boy, though," one man remarked. "It doesn't do a child any good, taking him about to these affairs."

"Perhaps he does look a little wan."

So he appeared, this elegantly dressed boy, with his great blue eyes, and gentle manners. Though barely fourteen, he had known the lash of the reform school, and spent many an hour in solitary confinement.

His mother bent over him and whispered in his ear. The boy shook his head gently but decidedly. The mother once more spoke to him in an undertone, evidently making some request. The boy again shook his head. At that moment one of the women, blazing with jewels, came up to them and smiled pleasantly at the lad, who stood, his hands impolitely thrust in his trousers pockets.

"Your son looks tired," she remarked.

"I fear he is," replied the mother.

"Let me take him with me," the other said, "and I will see if I cannot interest him."

"You are so kind," the mother said, prettily blushing.

"Thanks," the boy said, steadily, "but I prefer to stay with my mother."

"Fie; won't leave his mamma!" laughed the woman, passing along.

The remark excited a smile.

"The boy is jealous of the attentions shown the lovely widow by the men," one exclaimed, laughingly.

Once more the mother leaned over the boy to speak, but before she could say anything, he raised his blue eyes and looked her steadily in the face.

There were a number of persons within earshot, so she smiled with wonderful sweetness, and said, gayly:

"You are really a naughty boy, Harry, and if you keep on, I will stop loving you. So there!" She looked so girlish and tender that half the men in the room, who were not already under her spell, fell in love with her.

The boy said nothing, and an observant woman, who stood near the mother and son, said to a lady beside her:

"I am afraid that sweet Mrs. Orleton is going to have trouble with her son. He is very stubborn, anyone can see that by the set of his jaw."

"Yet he seems like a nice child."

"Looks and manners don't mean everything," was the decided answer.

More than one person noticed the difference the charming widow was having with her son, and that he was evidently refusing to obey some command.

At last the pair glided over to a couch which was unoccupied, and the mother, keeping the most angelic expression upon her face, said in a low, tense tone:

"Will you tell me what is the matter with you tonight? Hound! I am wild. Such chances as you have had!"

The boy took his delicate, tapering hands out of his pockets and laid them in his lap, but said nothing.

"Were you afraid? Did you think there was any danger?"

Still no answer, only that strange look at the soft hands.

"Speak, won't you, or I'll pay you back for every moment of agony you have caused me here."

"What is the use of speaking?" the boy asked, wearily.

"What is the use? Well, I like that." In spite of her growing anger, she did not raise her voice, nor did she relax her smile.

Before the boy could say more a lady joined them, and she began complimenting Mrs. Orleton upon her boy.

"Oh, hush!" the widow exclaimed, then she paled. Buck had told her what those two words had done, how they had betrayed her to Nick Carter. There might be others who remembered that mannerism of hers.

"He is a good boy sometimes," the mother answered, "but again he is naughty. To-night is one of the times. Still, he has decided to be my own boy again and do as I wish, hasn't he?" smiling at her son.

The boy's eyes drooped, an expression of weariness came over his face, but he did not answer.

The lady sitting by him had some magnificent rubies about her throat. There they lay like drops of blood. The boy felt his fingers twitch. He knew just how he could take them from her, without her ever knowing that they were gone. He realized that he could conceal them in one or more of the pockets made in his skin for this very purpose, so that he might be searched and the jewels could not be found.

"Are you still naughty?" he heard the soft tones urging him on. He knew that terrible punishment awaited him if he refused, as he had been doing all evening.

Well versed in jewels, and able to estimate their value at a glance, for he had been well trained, the boy criminal knew that these rubies were more valuable than diamonds, and that their theft would do much to better his condition, for he shuddered as he thought of the punishment to come from Oppie, the Devil.

The lady turned to him, smiling very sweetly. In front was a single ruby, probably one of the largest in the world. He had read of it in the Sunday papers. Now it was right before him, just begging to be taken.

"Mind your mamma, dear," the lady said, smiling.

"Why, she's begging me to take the stones herself," the poor boy thought.

His brain was in a whirl. He remembered vaguely the resolves he had made that very morning, and here he was going to break them.

Suddenly everything grew clear. He remembered some of the lessons taught at the reform school. His eyes fell upon the little blue mark. It had been pricked but once. When it was made, he had resolved that it should never be enlarged.

Suddenly he raised his head and looked the lady straight in the eyes.

"I do not think I will," he said, quietly, and somehow she was strangely impressed, although she felt surprised, for she believed in implicit obedience to parents.

"You little devil!" the mother exclaimed as the lady moved away, her priceless jewels still lying like drops of blood about her white throat; "do you know what this means?"

With the deadly sweat of unutterable fear streaming from his face, the boy said, in a low tone: "Yes," but would not look her in the face for fear he show his contempt and horror.

A battle had been fought and won; he realized that, and, although he knew torture was in store for him, a sensation of peace was stealing over the lad.

"We will go, then, and I think Oppie can teach you your duty to your parents," the mother muttered, although she had so well trained her face that, in spite of the fact that she saw her well-laid plans tumbling about her, she was as sweet and gentle in appearance as ever as she made her adieus to her hostess, and entered her carriage with the boy.

Once the door was closed upon them, she burst forth, but not in a loud voice, showering abuse upon him scarcely above a whisper.

"How dared you, how dared you?" she kept asking over and over again.

At last the boy replied, and his quiet intonation maddened her still more.

"I dared because I am tired of it all. I will not run any more risk."

"You will not; and who are you to say that?"

"Not much: the son of two criminals, but I am a human being, and I am going to try to save myself from the fate which has been and will be yours," he answered.

"We will see, my young hound; we will see," sneered the mother.

"You know what Oppie is capable of?" she continued, coldly.

"I suppose I do."

"And you are not afraid?"

"Yes, I am afraid. Of course I am afraid, but I am also afraid to keep up this life of stealing. Of course I am afraid," and the woman who bore him could feel the tender flesh quiver.

"Then let's go back."

The boy caught her hands in his own delicate, feverish ones, as he pleaded:

"Oh, mother, mother, don't say anything more. I have decided, but I am still afraid."

"You had better be."

"I know it, but surely I have done enough. Think of all the jewels I have stolen for you from the necks, bosoms and hands of those who have caressed me. Isn't that enough?"

"You little fool!"

"Yes, a fool from your standpoint, but, mother, I have learned other things, and I won't be a thief any longer."

"Take the results then."

"I will."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THROUGH THE WIRED WALLS.

In vain did Chick, Patsy and Ten-Ichi plead with Nick; he insisted upon going with them, and made plans with a rapidity which was astounding, considering the strain under which he had been since taking up this intricate case.

Chick and Ten-Ichi were detailed to make their way to the roof, and there await developments.

"Do not come in until I call," Nick commanded.

"Patsy, you go with me by the underground way. I think we will see the marked man and let him know that we, too, know the history of that mark upon his face," he continued.

"Watch out for our mark on the passage," Chick warned.

"Oh, yes; what is it?"

"A duplicate of that upon the man's face, done with red and blue pencil."

Nick laughed. They were fond of doing just such things as this, and he seldom reproved his assistants for their high spirits. The business, in spite of its excitement, was depressing enough; for such depths of infamy were uncovered as to make the most thoughtless pause, and his assistants were not that.

"Ready?" Nick asked; and they left by different ways to meet some distance from the house.

Nick insisted, when they reached the den where he had so nearly lost his life, upon going to the food hole through which he had clambered, and speaking to his friends as he called the lion and his mate. Patsy then had the satisfaction of seeing the mighty beasts come running as though to greet one they loved. He saw them rub their great heads against the bars and listened to their cries of welcome. It made him shiver when he thought of Nick exposed to their starving fury, but he saw that there was no doubt of Nick's strange power.

"I'll see that they are well taken care of," Nick said, firmly.

"Don't bring them home as pets," Patsy begged, "for we don't possess that strange power of yours."

Nick laughed.

"No, they are hardly suited for house pets, but they shall never again be crazed with hunger. They are magnificent specimens, and the zoo shall have them. There they will have the best of care, and I can run out and pay them a visit now and then."

"Nick Carter, I believe you are attached to them!" Patsy exclaimed, looking up into the strong, handsome face.

"You can just bet I am," Nick replied, laughing.

Having seen that these animals who had played so strange a part in his life were uninjured, Nick was ready to brave the savage men he was tracking down, and by way of a preliminary encounter, Nick and Patsy paid a visit to the saloon keeper.

The mark made by the outraged Orientals gleamed crimson upon his sallow face, about as large as a fifty-cent piece. Nick had seen it before, but took it for a birth-mark.

Now he stepped up to the man and repeated the meaning of the mark in excellent Cantonese.

Every vestige of color left the wretch's face, throwing the mark into greater prominence.

He shrank back, trembling from head to foot, when Nick lifted him bodily into the middle of the room, having forgotten for the moment the wounds on his arms and back. He was reminded by the pain, but even Patsy could not detect it in his face, certain as he was that Nick was suffering.

"There," Nick said, grimly, setting him down. "Now listen to me. We have been watching for you, and now we have you. I am not going to arrest you yet, but I will a little later on. If you stay here, however, and give no sign to any who may come through, that we are in the house of the secret chamber"—here he paused to see what effect this had upon the man, and was pleased to see the expression of helpless astonishment which came over it—"I will not betray you," touching lightly the mark upon the left cheek. "You will suffer nothing more than what the law metes out to you. Give us away, and" —Nick paused, significantly, and muttered a few words, also in Cantonese. The man understood. It was evident he could speak the dialect very well. The words had their effect, and the man ran to open his secret door.

"What was that you said, Nick?" Patsy asked, as they started on their downward way, for the passages burrowed deep into the earth before they ascended to the level of the cellar of the house to which they were seeking entrance.

"Ten-Ichi said about the same thing, but he merely shook his head when Chick asked him."

Nick smiled in the gloom, only lighted by their lanterns, and replied in a very low voice:

"It is difficult to explain, Patsy. It was one of the Oriental threats, that I am always present; that his thoughts were open books to me; that his deeds were before me, and that even his breath was held in my hands. In plain American, it means that I am onto him and that he will get it if he doesn't remember. It sounds worse in Cantonese."

"I should say so. I thought you were calling down all kinds of curses upon his hoary old head."

"He has called them himself, Patsy," Nick replied, quietly.

As they hurried along, Nick could not but marvel at the skill and patience of these criminals, who could burrow underground, disposing of their dirt in some satisfactory way; taking all this trouble and going to all this expense, and for what? Liberty to commit crimes which only deprived them of liberty to live.

"Here we are," Patsy said. "I know the place from its position, and here is Chick's mark."

As Patsy had reported, the door was easy to open, Nick having no trouble in forcing the hinges, and they walked in silence into the deserted cellar.

As they passed through Patsy pointed significantly to the network of wires covering the outside of the door, and Nick nodded.

"The door was open when Chick and Ten-Ichi came in," Patsy said, his lips close to Nick's ear.

Leading the way, Patsy stopped in front of another door, casting a somewhat mournful look at the sheet-iron cover of what had been the magnificent dynamo, but he said nothing, and when Nick had picked the lock they stole up the narrow stairs. Even they were wired. With the dynamo in operation, the secret chamber was as invulnerable as though it were defended by thousands of soldiers.

Patsy still led, and walked like one who knew every step thoroughly, as he did, for he was very accurate in anything he attempted.

Without stopping a moment, he went on, making several turnings, doubling upon his tracks, and finally stopping before what looked like a dead wall.

Placing his lips against Nick's ear, he breathed, rather than spoke, the words:

"Here's the place."

For an instant they stood outside in the darkness, for they had extinguished their lanterns.

As they waited, listening, they heard the sound of voices.

"The cage isn't empty," Nick whispered to Patsy. "I wonder if they are all there?"

"The gang is small. I think the man and his wife and the boy are the only helpers Oppie, the Devil, has," Patsy answered.

"The servants?"

"I do not think they have any part in the doings of the house."

"Then we outnumber them pretty heavily," Nick said, still speaking in that faint whisper.

"You're right."

Just then a frightful shriek rang out on the air, causing the detectives astonishment and making them grasp their guns, as they pressed the tiny piece of inlaid wood in the wall Patsy had learned was the spring which controlled the entrance into this room of mystery.

## CHAPTER XII.

### OPPIE, THE DEVIL, ESCAPES.

Reaching the house, Chick and Ten-Ichi made their way easily up the fire escape onto the roof. There, as Patsy had reported, was the immense skylight, and, creeping to it, they found that it was raised a little so that they could both see and hear.

Chick readily recognized the man sitting at a desk, his evil thoughts pictured upon his face, scarred by Nick's bullet.

"Buck White was telling the truth when he said Oppie, the Devil, was the prime mover," he said, in the same low whisper that Nick and Patsy used.

"It is strange how criminals unburden themselves to those they believe are dying," Ten-Ichi remarked, pensively. There were many things which seemed strange to him in this Occidental life.

"Wrongdoers are always wanting to confess," Chick returned, "and they relieve themselves to the dying because they think there is no danger of betrayal. I tell you, though, I've been in this business for a good many years, and yet I have never been able to understand why a man is a criminal."

"No?"

"No. Why, if all the energy wasted in committing crime were turned in legitimate directions, this world would be too good to last."

Ten-Ichi listened politely, although he thought his young companion was really wasting his time speculating on what he regarded as the actions of fate. Then both suddenly became keenly alert, for they heard a voice speaking, and they crawled to the very edge and peeped down.

"Yes, sir, he refused to do a single thing, and he has never had better opportunities."

The evil face turned from the desk, and a pair of cruel eyes were bent upon a boy, who was held by the arm, his captor being a handsome woman in rich evening dress.

"I do not think I understand you," the man said, slowly, but before the woman could speak the boy's treble broke in:

"Oh, yes, you do. I've fumbled it, Oppie, and you can do your worst. I tell you I won't be a 'dip' any longer for any of you."

"Rank rebellion in our midst," the man said, slowly.

"Yes, sir, rebellion," said the boy, firmly, although the detectives could see that he was shaking with a justifiable fear.

"What did he miss taking?" asked the man.

"What? Why, for one, the Harcourt diamonds—but, worst of all, the rubies."

"What? Not the finest rubies in the world?"

"Those were the ones. If she had wanted him to take them she could not have given him a better chance."

"And you refused to take advantage of the opportunity?"

The boy did not trust his voice, but simply nodded.

"Look here, Harry," the man said, in a dangerously smooth tone, "I wonder if you know how much time and trouble you have caused me?"

"Perhaps, as I shared it all, I do," he answered, with precocious calmness.

"Just as though you were my own son, I have taught you all you know. I have trained those fingers of yours."

The boy took his white hands out of his pockets and gazed with loathing upon their perfect proportions and the dexterous finger tips.

"I taught you how to meet the eyes of those you had robbed with a childish, innocent glance. I prepared your skin so you could hide the jewels and never be detected; in fact, I have made you the best pickpocket in the country."

"And the worst boy of my age in any country," cried the boy, with a catch in his voice.

"Well, that's a distinction a good many would like to have. Still, after I have made of you what you are, I do not propose to be thwarted in my carefully laid plans. You are going to keep in the path you have entered."

The man's voice was calm and clear.

"Sure you are," broke in another voice, one deep and harsh, and the boy saw his father standing by the side of his tormentor.

"And I tell you I will not," returned the boy, in firm accents, and then he turned to his father.

"You haven't been much of a father to me, but I want you to help me," he begged, holding out his right hand pleadingly.

"You see this mark, father. You all tried to get me to conceal it by making me left handed, but it's there for life."

"And just as that mark is on your hand, my boy, so is the mark of the criminal upon your soul," came in deep tones from the leader.

The boy vigorously shook his head.

"That's a lie. I am not ashamed of the mark on my hand. I think it will keep me from becoming what you are. After this when I think of doing something wrong, I will look at it and remember."

"Remember what?" cried the mother, her voice shrill with anger.

"That I have something inside of me which doesn't want to be a criminal, and won't be any longer," and the young lad was held aloft and the spirit of a martyr burned in the blue eyes.

The leader gave forth a sound between a curse and a groan, and, springing upon the boy, clutched him, fire blazing from his eyes.

"You dare to defy me?" he shouted.

Chick and Ten-Ichi were wild to get down, but they remembered Nick's orders and waited, although their blood was boiling.

"I'll teach you a lesson, you imp, which you won't forget for a while."

"I may not forget the lesson, but I also won't forget the lesson I have learned from my mark here," the boy cried, bravely.

The man laughed a terrible laugh, then, in a moment, before anyone could interfere; before the detectives above could crawl through the opening; before either father or mother could protect their neglected and abused child, the fiend in human guise, whom they had obeyed blindly, caught the boy in his arms and dashed him against wall. It was her voice heard in the heartrending scream that followed.

It had needed but the scream to make Nick and Patsy act, and they tumbled through the open panel upon a mad scene. As Buck, criminal though he was, saw the inhuman act of his leader, he sprang upon his partner in crime, only to receive a thrust from the same knife. Buck fell back, gasping, not mortally injured, but bleeding profusely.

As he fell, he knocked Patsy down, and the young detective, striking a chair in his fall, lay stunned.

For many months Nick and Oppie, the Devil, had learned to stand face to face, but just now Nick was in no condition physically to cope with so powerful an adversary.

Above Chick and Ten-Ichi were doing their best to break the glass and get through, but so far they had not succeeded.

With a sudden bound, realizing that through some fluke or other Nick had escaped the wild beasts, Oppie was upon him, his knife held ready for a thrust.

Nick was in frightful pain. Every moment caused him untold agony, yet he did not flinch, but with one of those rapid movements for which he is so justly famed he caught the knife as it descended and threw it across the room without receiving a scratch, then he struck the man a blow right across the scar his bullet had traced when last they had met.

The strength with which this was given caused the man to stagger, and before he could recover himself Nick caught him in his arms, and, with a warning cry to his assistants, threw him straight through the heavy glass of the skylight. They all stood terrified at his superhuman strength, but Nick, although he could feel the pains shooting all over his body, did not pause, but snapped handcuffs upon Buck and his wife, and then turned toward little Harry, knowing his boys on the roof would take care of Oppie.

The boy lay motionless, although still conscious.

Patsy leaned over the lad to ascertain if he were badly injured, and discovered, to his satisfaction, that, except for a slight gash across the forehead and a bruised shoulder, the boy suffered no severe pain. Nick, in the meantime, had turned on Buck White and snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists. The woman's love for her child, who she supposed had been killed, overcame all thoughts of escape, or of vengeance upon the detectives who now had her in their power.

After uttering the piercing scream, which had nearly brought Chick and Ten-Ichi tumbling through the skylight, she had rushed to the motionless form of her boy lying stretched out close to the wainscoting of the room. Brushing Patsy aside, she knelt beside the young lad, sobbing and crying out: "Speak to me. Oh, speak to me, so that I'll know you are alive, and haven't been cruelly taken from me."

The distressed mother was on the point of becoming hysterical, when a faint smile on the childish lips assured her that her fears were groundless. With a cry of joy, she kissed the blood-stained forehead, murmuring soothing words of comfort.

This exhibition of unfeigned maternal love and tenderness, the existence of which the detectives hardly expected to see in this cold, scheming woman, who showed no conscience in allowing her own flesh and blood to be

trained in the practice of crimes that would corrupt his whole nature and finally place him in the clutches of the law, excited a compassion in the breasts of these iron-hearted men that softened, for a moment, their recollection of her reprehensible career of wrongdoing.

The detectives realized that it was no time for delay, though they did not want to be unnecessarily brutal with the woman in her present sorrow by reminding her that she was a criminal whom they intended placing behind prison bars within half an hour.

Nick was about to proceed as tactfully as possible in recalling her to a realization of the actual state of affairs and the part each person in the room was to play, when the tension was broken by a movement of Buck White making an effort to escape. He made a dash for the door, thinking only of his own safety, not caring very much for the fate of his wife and son, if only he could get away.

But the vigilant eye of Nick Carter had been watching him, though seemingly watching nothing but the touching scene between mother and son.

The detective's foot suddenly shot across the path of the crook as he started to run, and Buck fell heavily to the floor.

"Well, my man, you made a miscalculation that time," said Nick, with a grim smile, as he took hold of White and lifted him to his feet.

The only reply was a mumbled curse, as the man dropped into a chair.

"See here," said Nick. "I don't intend trifling with you any longer." He started to go through the pockets of the man, hoping to discover the lost jewels.

"What are you looking for?" asked Buck, with an assured smile.

"You know very well what I want," responded Nick, continuing the search.

A look of triumph overspread the features of the man sitting in the chair as the detective's countenance showed disappointment when the objects Nick expected to find were not revealed.

"Nick Carter, you think you are a very slick individual, don't you?" jeered Buck. His eyes gleamed with hatred as he looked the great detective straight in the eyes, and hissed: "You shall never get those jewels!"

"He will!" rang out the sharp, contradicting reply in a woman's voice tense with angry emotion. It was Buck's wife who had spoken the words.

She was on her feet in an instant and faced her husband, who cast a warning glance in her direction when he realized what purpose she had in view.

Ignoring his look of displeasure, she addressed Nick: "That fiend, Oppie, the Devil, will find out what it means to try to kill my child. The scoundrel, the villain, to dash his poor little body against the wall as if he were some contemptible, unclean thing. My only son, and nearly murdered under my very eyes!

"Do you think," she continued, turning fiercely upon Buck White, "that I will stand by and calmly let the man who has the jewels escape after trying to murder our boy—my boy?"

Buck remained in the same position that he had taken some minutes before, listening to his wife's words with an air of sullkiness, mingled with despair. He thought more of the jewels than his son's life, and the prospect of losing his share of the "divy" when they were safely disposed of gave him a great deal of concern.

"Oppie, the Devil, has the jewels in his pocket. Let me get my hands on the hound, and I will tear his eyes out!" shouted the infuriated woman, thinking only of revenge.

Nick looked up at the skylight, through which Oppie, the Devil, had been thrown so violently only a short time before, expecting to hear the voice of Chick calling to him that they had captured their man and were holding him, awaiting orders from the Chief.

The sounds of a struggle, after the heavy body of Oppie, the Devil, had crashed through the skylight, when he was tossed out of the room by Nick, had increased considerably since Buck's wife informed the two detectives who it was that had the jewels in his possession.

Suddenly the sound of Chick's voice was heard above the scuffling on the roof, as he cried out: "Nick, Nick! the duffer has got away!"

The great detective gave hurried instructions to Patsy: "Take the man and woman to the police station and send the boy to a hospital. We can't let Oppie, the Devil, escape."

With one bound, Nick cleared the room, caught the edge of the skylight, and drew himself to the roof.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### OVER THE ROOFS.

When Nick had gained the top and stood on the [illegible] roof, he saw three figures running swiftly over

the next house, Oppie, the Devil, in the lead, Chick close behind, and Ten-Ichi last in the line.

The buildings had been built so close together that their roofs presented one vast expanse of tin a block long, painted a dull red, the surface of which was broken up by the hurdle-like party walls projecting three or four feet above the housetops.

An open scuttle was visible on the furthest house, except the last from the corner. Oppie, the Devil, had taken a diagonal course, which indicated that this was the point he was making for.

Nick divined his purpose and started to head him off. Chick had caught up with Oppie and was about to grab hold of him when his foot slipped, throwing the young detective to his knees.

Oppie, who hated the representatives of the law with all the intensity which his fiendish nature was capable of, threw all caution to the winds, though aware of being hard pressed by his enemies, and delayed his flight just long enough to direct a vicious kick at the head of Chick before the young man could regain his feet.

Nick's assistant rolled out of range barely in time to escape a blow that, had it reached its intended mark, would have rendered him unconscious, and probably killed him.

Ten-Ichi had caught up with the two men and made a dash for Oppie, but the villain, seeing that he was losing time, made off before a hand could be laid upon him.

Nick, who had a much greater distance to cover at this juncture than his assistants, barely reached the three men, when the chase started afresh, with Oppie still in the lead. But Nick was only a few feet behind him, and gradually shortening the distance between them. A moment later the slippery Oppie reached the open scuttle. Nick's hand was already on his shoulder, but capture seemed so certain to Oppie that instead of lessening his speed, to give himself time to clutch the rungs of the ladder and scramble down, he took a flying leap for the open space, and shot out of sight, landing with a crash among boxes and old bottles in the room below.

Nick saw that no time should be lost, and, using the more dangerous method of making a quick descent, jumped through the hole after his quarry. The great detective had expected to land feet foremost on the back of Oppie before the latter could recover himself—his leap had followed so closely upon that of the other man.

Chick and Ten-Ichi had rushed to the open scuttle, prepared to see the crook with a pair of Nick's neatest bracelets adorning his hands. But Oppie was not there.

The room was a small cubby-hole, just large enough to contain a stout ladder, to be used by the members of the house to effect a quick exit in case of fire. The ladder had been removed, however, and the place turned into a storehouse for odds and ends deemed useless by the members of the family, and thrown aside.

The removal of the ladder had saved the men from sustaining severe injuries when they took their desperate leap.

Chick and Ten-Ichi lost no time in dropping from the edge of the scuttle and landing beside their chief, who by this time was putting his shoulder to the door of the cubby-hole, making an effort to break the lock which Oppie, the Devil, had sprung before continuing his mad dash for liberty.

The door was made of sheet iron, covered with a thin paneling of papier maché, grained to give it the appearance of oak. Nick was deceived only for a moment, and wasted no more time in trying to beat his way through by mere force of muscle when he had an instrument he carried about him for just such an emergency as the present one. This was a small bomb about the size of an almond, containing a very powerful explosive, more effective than nitroglycerin, invented by Nick and prepared by a secret process in his own laboratory. When the powder was touched off the force of the explosion acted only in one direction and on a certain given point, making it perfectly safe for a person to stand within two feet of the object to be blown open.

The detective took one of these almond-shaped bombs from his pocket, placed it in the keyhole, and tapped the pointed end with the tip of a lead pencil.

A muffled explosion instantly followed this operation, and the lock was broken without the rest of the door being injured. A violent push on one of its panels made the hinges creak as it swung outward, and the detectives again had a fair field for the chase.

"Ten-Ichi," ordered Nick, "go to the street and see if Oppie has reached the street. Chick, station yourself in the back yard, so that he can't take to the fences. I will examine every room in the house. He might be hiding in the building, intending to double on his tracks."

"All right," responded his assistants, in unison, as they dashed off to their respective stations.

At the same time, Nick made for the front room on the floor where this rapid-fire conversation had taken place. Poking his head out of the window, he cast anxious glances up and down the street.

It was deserted, except for a sleepy-looking chauffeur standing on the curbstone with his foot placed on the step of an immense automobile painted green, as if he were about to enter the machine and drive away.

An excited man bounded from the front steps below the window from which Nick was surveying the street. He went tearing along the sidewalk to where the automobile stood and knocked the chauffeur down with a terrible right-hand swing.

Not waiting to investigate the effects of his pugilistic powers, the man jumped into the machine and threw the controlling lever over to the last notch.

There was a loud report and a succession of "chug, chugs," followed by a lunge of the heavy machine as it swayed to one side for an instant, and then shot down the street with terrific speed, disappearing from the detective's sight.

The man in the machine was Oppie, the Devil.

Nick's first impulse was to ring up headquarters, give a description of Oppie and let an alarm be sent out to intercept his man. But the great detective's professional pride scorned any such action.

"No," said he, "I will not stoop to that, even if I am nearly worn out from the constant strain and loss of sleep I have undergone the last few days. I and my assistants will catch that scoundrel unaided by the police and give him into the hands of the law ourselves, if we have to chase him around the earth from now till doomsday."

The square, determined jaw of Nick Carter snapped with an ominous click, after delivering himself of this speech, that boded no particular good to Oppie, the Devil.

He shouted to his faithful companions to rejoin him in the street.

"There is a garage in the next block," he said, as the three sprinted along.

He was well known to the manager, who saw that there was no time for explanations on Nick's part other than that he wanted the swiftest auto car in the place in the shortest possible time.

A huge machine had been brought out to the runway of the garage only a short time previous for a large motor party that was expected to arrive in five minutes.

"This will do," said Nick, breathlessly, as he jumped in with Chick and Ten-Ichi.

"If the people who were going to use this machine say anything, tell them that Nick Carter, America's greatest detective, has found it necessary to borrow it a while, as he is after one of the most slippery customers in this country," shouted Chick over his shoulder to the manager of the garage.

"A stern chase is a long chase," is frequently heard in the mouths of old salts who have trod the decks of a man-of-war.

It was so in this case. Oppie, the Devil, had a start of a few minutes, which counted greatly in his favor, though Nick's machine was capable of a higher rate of speed. Oppie also had the advantage of being out of sight of the occupants of the pursuing automobile before it had time to get under way. He had made a number of turns and twists up various side streets to throw Nick off the scent.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MILE A MINUTE IN AN AUTO.

Oppie avoided the ferries, as he knew that it would be an easy matter for Nick to step to a phone and notify the officers at each one to stop him. He felt, on the other hand, that the city was getting too hot for him, and that the discreet thing to do was to leave as soon as he could get away.

"If I boldly take to one of the main avenues and gain the old Kingsbridge road there will be a free passage for up the State," said Oppie to himself. "This fly mug of a detective will be hunting for me in the city, when I am miles away.

"At Fishkill, I'll leave this go-cart in some side street, and hie over the ferry to Newburgh. Then a train to Jersey City and Philadelphia for mine. Then a steamer to Southampton, and over to Amsterdam.

"That will lose him for a while; and besides, I need a little sea air," reflected Oppie, with a smirk of satisfaction on his face, as if the thing were already done.

Nick's thoughts had also been busy with this same problem that occupied the mind of Oppie, the Devil.

Turning to his companions as the machine whizzed up the lower part of Fifth Avenue, he said: "Oppie isn't going to trust himself on any of the ferries. He has probably taken this thoroughfare on account of so little

traffic and a smooth, easy ride over the asphalt that will give him a chance to make speed.

"I know how that crook's thinking apparatus works, and you can take it from me that he imagines that he has mapped out a route which we won't suspect is the one he has taken."

Later events proved that the keen intelligence of the great detective had reasoned out the plan for escape evolved by the scoundrel they were after.

As Nick's automobile reached the upper end of Central Park at One Hundred and Tenth Street, a man in a machine they had overtaken shouted out: "What is it, a speed test?"

"Why?" asked Chick.

"A fellow in a green auto just dashed by us, going as fast as you people," came the quick reply.

Nick waited for no more questions or explanations, but tugged impatiently at the controlling lever to see if he could increase the speed a little more, though the indicator showed the highest number of revolutions the cylinder was capable of making under the present head of steam.

The machine swung around a ticklish curve at One Hundred and Twentieth Street and Mount Morris Avenue, under the careful eye and steel-like grip of Nick Carter, whose wonderful control prevented what might have been a dangerous spill if a less experienced hand had had the lever.

"What's that?" said Chick as he detected the tail end of a green automobile disappear around another short turn at One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Street, where Mount Morris Avenue comes abruptly to an end. "There goes our meat, I'll bet," he continued.

Nick guided the machine over this danger spot with as much ease and safety as he had passed the other one.

Only four blocks ahead of them they saw the huge green automobile, and Oppie, the Devil, sitting in the chauffeur's seat, bending over the lever in a tension of anxiety. A swift glance behind revealed to him how close his pursuers were upon him.

He instantly turned the crank that controlled the pressure of the machine, which quickly lengthened the distance between the two automobiles.

"He is getting away again!" cried Chick.

"Have no fear of that, this time," replied Nick Carter, in a tone of grim determination.

"If it is willed that he shall get away, it can't be helped," said Ten-Ichi, relapsing into his occasional mood of Oriental fatalism.

This remark was received in silence.

By this time pedestrians had stopped and formed a line along the curbstone for blocks, watching a race which they realized was an unusual one. The spectators took sides and cheered their favorites as they whizzed by with lightning-like rapidity.

"Hully gee!" sang out a ragged, little urchin who carried a bunch of papers under his arm, "youse ought ter be pinched fer breakin' de speed limit."

The automobiles flew on and on, till the people, trees and houses appeared to the occupants like so many blurred impressions suddenly thrust before their eyes and instantly withdrawn.

The green auto was slowly but surely leaving Nick's car behind. The detective didn't dare take his eye from the objects ahead of him or say a word, but Chick, by the means of mental telepathy, a science which the two detectives had perfected and learned to use with as much ease as the Morse alphabet, interpreted the following message from his chief: "We must increase our speed if we expect to catch up with Oppie. Hold down the valve to prevent the unnecessary escape of the steam and we will have more power. Another ten pounds are required to make it."

Chick signaled Nick by the same method of communication, which required neither signs, looks nor words, that he understood what the detective ordered him to do. He instantly bent over and lifted a small, square trap in the wooden floor of the motor car, exposing the working parts of the machinery.

Clouds of exhaust steam enveloped his body and hid him from view. Grabbing a wrench, he tried to hold down the safety valve, so that more of the steam would find its way into the piston cylinder instead of escaping to the air.

It was impossible for him to keep the valve down effectually from his position on the seat. Dropping to the floor on his hands and knees, he took a small hatchet he always carried in his pocket and cut from the trap-door a piece of wood the size of a cribbage board. This he placed over the safety valve, and sat astride of it, his feet dangling halfway to the ground.

Chick's full weight closed the valve completely, and the effect on the action of the piston rod became noticeable at once. The machine forged ahead at a speed that

was marvelous. The two autos were going at a rate of a little less than a mile a minute when they crossed Kingsbridge, over the Harlem River.

Nick Carter's automobile ate up space between the two machines, and seemed to gain two feet in every five. As they approached a part of the macadamized road—for the thickly populated districts had been left behind—where it spread out to double its width, the detective swerved the machine to the left. A few seconds afterward it came up alongside of the green car.

Oppie, the Devil, saw that Nick was determined to get him, and the fear of capture unnerved him. He released the lever, intending to slow down and jump out when it seemed safe to do so without endangering his precious limbs on the hard surface of the roadbed.

A thick wood, heavily covered with underbrush, lay a short distance ahead.

"If I can make that, I am safe," thought Oppie.

Nick saw at once what Oppie had in mind the moment he began to shut off the power of the green auto, and decided upon quick action.

The machines, from their close parallel position, enabled the detective to step from one to the other. Their speed had slackened to thirty miles an hour.

Chick, who was no longer needed on the safety valve, had received his instructions by mental telepathy, and knew what was expected from him and Ten-Ichi. At a given signal the three detectives jumped over the side of the green motor car, Nick grappling with Oppie, while Chick grabbed the lever to steady the machine and hold it on its course.

The leap was taken none too soon, for Nick's auto, which ran wild the moment his hand was taken from the steering gear, plunged into a ditch and blew up with a loud report.

The green auto sped on, while Nick and Oppie, the Devil, were locked in a desperate embrace.

Ten-Ichi was about to throw himself on Oppie, when Nick cried: "Never mind, I can handle this ugly duckling without any help."

With this remark no sooner out of his mouth, he had the handcuffs on the squirming, cursing rascal.

Chick, in the meanwhile, had brought the auto to a standstill. It stood in the shadow of the wood that Oppie had hoped would prove a refuge from his enemies.

Nick searched Oppie's clothes and found the diamonds concealed in a chamois pouch sewed to his undershirt.

"Caught with the goods on," said Nick Carter, with a smile, as he opened the bag, disclosing Miss Winston's wonderful jewels, valued in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"Confound you, my time will soon come, and when it does, I will not leave your body until I am sure that the last breath has left it," hissed the baffled criminal.

"You won't get the chance for some time to come, my friend," said Nick, dryly. "I intend to put you where you won't prey on the public or have an opportunity to carry out any threats for several years to come. And when you do get out, finally, I will be ready to give you a warm reception, if you try any of your tricks." concluded Nick Carter, quietly, but with that glitter in his eye which made men of Oppie's stamp quail with fear.

The crestfallen criminal lost all his bravado after this speech of Nick, and relapsed into a silence that was not broken till Nick had him placed in the Tombs, after the party arrived in the city.

Oppie is now serving a twenty-year service in Sing Sing, and the prison authorities say that his spirit seems to have been completely broken.

Upon their arrival at Nick's house, the detectives met Patsy, who explained that Buck White and his wife were safe behind the bars at the police station.

Nick, who had taken an interest in the young son of the couple, and wished to see him grow up an honest and law-abiding man, took Harry under his special protection and gave the boy all the opportunities to lead a successful career.

True to his promise, Nick handed over the gems to the actress, whose automobile, it seems, he had used in their recovery, and received in exchange the jeweled portrait so earnestly desired on the other side of the Atlantic.

The other young women who had sustained losses through the deftness of Harry's fingers regained their valuables.

The physical and mental strain of the past few days were beginning to tell even upon such an iron constitution as Nick's. A few days' rest put him in form again, however, and he began to unearth a nest of schemers who were playing for large stakes.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 462, will contain "Nick Carter and the Marixburg Affair; or, Foiling a Great Conspiracy."

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